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ABSTRACT

Designed for use in a one-semester course in U.S. history or literature at the intermediate or secondary level, this collection of the Civil War letters of Lewis Bissell, a Union soldier, is divided into two major parts. Part 1 (chapters 1 through 5) covers the period of time Bissell spent guarding Washington, District of Columbia. Each chapter corresponds to a change in locale. Part 2 (chapters 6 through 9) covers the time Bissell was involved in combat and is divided by specific campaigns. The firsthand accounts of the war provided in these letters offer students an insider's view of the Civil War as well as insights into human nature, the experience of war, and Northern society. Where relevant, chapters are introduced by historical background information, overviews of the major themes in the letters, items for identification, materials for supplemental study, and background information for using the letters in the literature course. Additional notes to the teacher outline possible texts to use in conjunction with the letters and recommendations for course planning. Appendices contain "An Appeal to the Men of Connecticut," army command structure, a diagram of the armies of the United States, and a "rebel letter." Although designed as a one-semester course, excerpts from this collection can be integrated into intermediate and secondary social studies or humanities units on the Civil War. (LP)

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A HISTORY AND LITERATURE CURRICULUM

THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF LEWIS BISSELL

BY MARK OLCOTT WITH DAVID LEAR

THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS
OF
LEWIS BISSELL



A CURRICULUM



LEWIS BISSELL 1862

THE
CIVIL WAR LETTERS
OF
LEWIS BISSELL
A Curriculum

By
Mark Olcott
With
David Lear

1981

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DEDICATED TO HUDDY

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This book was made possible because the Bissell family possessed a sense of history. Henry Bissell saved all of his son's letters and Lewis Bissell preserved them during his lifetime. Carl Bissell, Lewis' son, did the first work in preparing the letters for public use. Georgette Bissell Allen, Carl's daughter, currently possesses the letters and generously allowed us full use of them during the project. She also provided out-of-print books from her library, genealogical information, old newspaper clippings, and photographs. Her solid support and encouragement have been invaluable. Finally, Georgette Allen's son, John Allen, first brought the letters to my wife's attention, and was the first sounding board for the idea of the project.

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Students at the school have played an important role in the completion of the book. Without their enthusiasm for learning I would never have attempted this project. Certain ones were directly involved with the book. Kevin Hardwick (class of 1980) my research assistant, provided me with notebooks full of useful information on Bissell and the regiment. Besides his research work, Kevin made many contacts with resource people in the community. Sean Beardsley (class of 1980) helped in the initial stages of the book. Tom Traubitz (class of 1981) designed the computer index.

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Mark S. Olcott

INTRODUCTION

The History Course:

The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell span the period from September 17, 1862 to July 8, 1865. Most of the letters are from Lewis to his family, mainly his father. Though the family wrote often to Lewis, only a handful of the letters they sent to him survived the war.

The collection of letters is divided into nine chapters, and the book has two major sections. Part I contains chapters one through five and covers the period of time Lewis Bissell spent guarding Washington. The chapters correspond to each change in locale. Part II, chapters six through nine, covers the time Bissell was involved in combat and is divided by campaign.

These letters provide a fascinating view of a young man who survives a tragic and bloody war. The ways in which he changes through this experience provide a basis for much of the discussion of the letters. Another aspect of the letters is that through Lewis an interesting picture of Northern society emerges. Also, the letters give an insider's opinion of the Army of the Potomac, particularly in its final form during the 1864-1865 Virginia campaign.

The letters are an invaluable historical primary source, and their value as such has been recognized by historians such as Bruce Catton. Indeed, history is written from sources such as Bissell's letters but history students rarely see those types of sources. When they do, they get a 'selection' from a prominent individual, a selection which rarely provides insight into the humanity of the individual.

The course which has been developed is an attempt to give history students the chance to realize the thrill and excitement the historian feels when he uncovers an extraordinary source, which these letters are. By doing this, the student will also have the opportunity to use the historical method which is: identification of a problem, formulation of a hypothesis, searching for evidence, interpreting the evidence, and presenting the account.

After completing this curriculum, you, the student, will know Lewis Bissell, his family and his comrades. You will have gained a very personalized view of Northern society, and you will have an understanding of life in the army and how the Army of the Potomac represented the changing Northern society. What will be most valuable about your knowledge is that you will be discovering it yourself, not having it explained second or third hand in a textbook.

To help you with your discovery, minimum background material has been provided. Each chapter has a section entitled Historical Background, which briefly surveys pertinent data concerning Bissell's regiment and also some major events in the war during the time covered by the chapter. The Historical Background is not meant to be inclusive but only to direct your attention to some of the important events. A text used in conjunction with the letters will fill in the gaps.

Every chapter in Part I (one through five) contains Items for Identification. These items were chosen to indicate the types of things you should be researching in order to fully understand the content of the letters. In Part II, it is expected that the student will compare his own list of items that need to be identified.

In the section entitled "The Letters", a number of questions are asked concerning Lewis Bissell, Northern Society, and the Army. These questions are to be read and discussed prior to and referred to while reading the letters. They were designed for use in class discussion and can be adapted to provide weekly or daily writing assignments as well as research projects.

At the end of each chapter a Supplemental Study section is included. The readings and themes mentioned are suggestions, and teachers may want to modify them to include major writing assignments depending on their students' interests and abilities. The usage of other sources, mainly of an interpretive nature, is important in allowing the student to compare their findings with those of professional historians. This is a particularly valuable aspect to using Bruce Catton's A Stillness at Appomattox with chapters five through nine of The Letters. Also, the suggested books often give important insights into the war, thereby allowing the student to make a judgement on the validity of the work based on what Bissell may have revealed in his letters.

There are many projects mentioned in the chapter introductions that serve to further involve the student. Keeping track of all of Bissell's comrades is a project the whole class can do by compiling information from the letters and consulting service records at the National Archives. Tracing Bissell's movements provides a useful lesson in geography. Another valuable assignment is for each student to choose a topic and write a research paper due at the end of the course. Potential titles can be found in the chapter introductions as well as the letters themselves.

The Literature Course:

This course has been designed to correlate with the history studies and both courses of study are directly related to the letters of Lewis Bissell. Naturally enough, the history course follows a chronological pattern, observing, through the perceptions of Lewis Bissell, the course of the Civil War.

However, as well as following a distinct chronological development, the history course explores certain themes in each of the nine chapters, and the literature course is designed to expand upon these themes in both the required readings and the writing assignments. Thus, for example, a principal theme

explored in chapter one is that of the values held by Lewis Bissell. The required text in the literature course is A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain, first published in 1889. Students will examine the values held by Hank Morgan, Twain's narrator, in order to compare and contrast these values with those of Lewis Bissell and the somewhat limited society of Santam, Connecticut where he had been born and raised. Chapters six and seven are primarily concerned with Bissell's direct involvement in combat. The texts for the English class are All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque and The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane. Each novel presents detailed, and often horrifying, realistic descriptions of the nature of battle. Students will examine narrative technique and points of view, and will compare and contrast the reactions of Bissell in his involvement with bloody full-scale combat, with the feelings and attitudes of Remarque's Paul Baumer and Crane's unnamed narrator.

The literature studies throughout the entire course are concerned with two principal areas of study: firstly, the observation and experience of warfare in literature and secondly, the nature of various aspects of American society and literary culture from the 1840's through the 1880's. In chapter seven, a pivotal point is reached with The Red Badge of Courage. This novel is the key to exploring the essential themes of the curriculum. It is concerned with the depiction of warfare, specifically the Civil War, and relates the experiences of a young man who has many of the values and a social and psychological background remarkably similar to Lewis Bissell's. Additionally, this novel is also one of the most celebrated examples of American literary realism, illustrating a rejection of Romanticism and a concern with depicting the nature of the American experience in realistic literary terms. Furthermore, the course opens and closes with the works of two late Victorian American writers--A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court by Twain and A Hazard of New Fortunes by William Dean Howells--both of which are deliberate attempts to comment realistically on the rapidly changing American society of the late nineteenth century.

For the maximum benefit of the curriculum, it is suggested that throughout the course, the students be given daily reading assignments so that they may adopt a regular program of study. Vocabulary work and word lists could be given out every week that cover the reading homework of the following week, thus enabling a vocabulary study in context. After each chapter introduction a possible writing assignment is indicated.

A Note on Editing:

In the 1940's, Carl H. Bissell (1881-1963), Lewis Bissell's son, began the arduous task of transcribing and editing his father's letters. Lewis Bissell had an incomplete education, due in part to his mother's wishes that he work on the farm. Consequently, his letters have a variety of errors. In most cases, the addition of periods and commas, and the construction of paragraphs, was all that was needed to make the letters more easily understandable. In some cases, sentences had to be reconstructed. This was done without tampering with the context. In general though, we have tried to do as little editing as possible though we freely corrected spelling with the exception of names of family, friends, minor characters, and some locations.

Though the editing makes for easier reading, there are drawbacks. One is that you will not see the remarkable improvement in his letters over the thirty-four months he is in the army. Lewis' father was constantly correcting his grammar and spelling, and his son was a good student. To give you an idea of his writing, we have included two unedited letters, numbers 1 and 73A.

A Note to Teachers:

The curriculum was designed as a one semester course in history and literature. Realizing that not every school can adopt our program in its totality, we have attempted to make it as flexible as possible yet still retain its vigor. We also recognize that the teacher's role is a significant factor in a student's learning, so while providing specific general guidelines, the daily operation of the course has been reserved for the instructor. We feel the curriculum is demanding but extraordinarily rewarding to students and teachers.

A text is recommended for use in this curriculum. You may find a suitable one from among *The Civil War* or *This Hallowed Ground* by Bruce Catton, or Randall and Donald's *The Civil War and Reconstruction*. For American History prior to the Civil War, *Freedom and Crisis Vol. I*, by Weinstein and Wilson, pays special attention to the issues that divided America.

When we developed the curriculum, we planned for frequent field trips. The Washington area provides many opportunities for students to examine at first hand buildings, locations and battlefields mentioned in the letters. For example, the Slave Pen is still standing in Alexandria, though the Marshall House has been destroyed. Many of the forts at which Bissell was stationed are freeways and housing developments, though remains of some are visible and Fort Ward has been preserved. Battlefields are in various states of preservation. The position Bissell charged at Cold Harbor has been preserved, but many of the locations Bissell mentions at Petersburg have not. But wherever you are located, you will find museums that have rifles, clothing newspapers, etc., from the Civil War. We strongly urge you take advantage of these types of resources.

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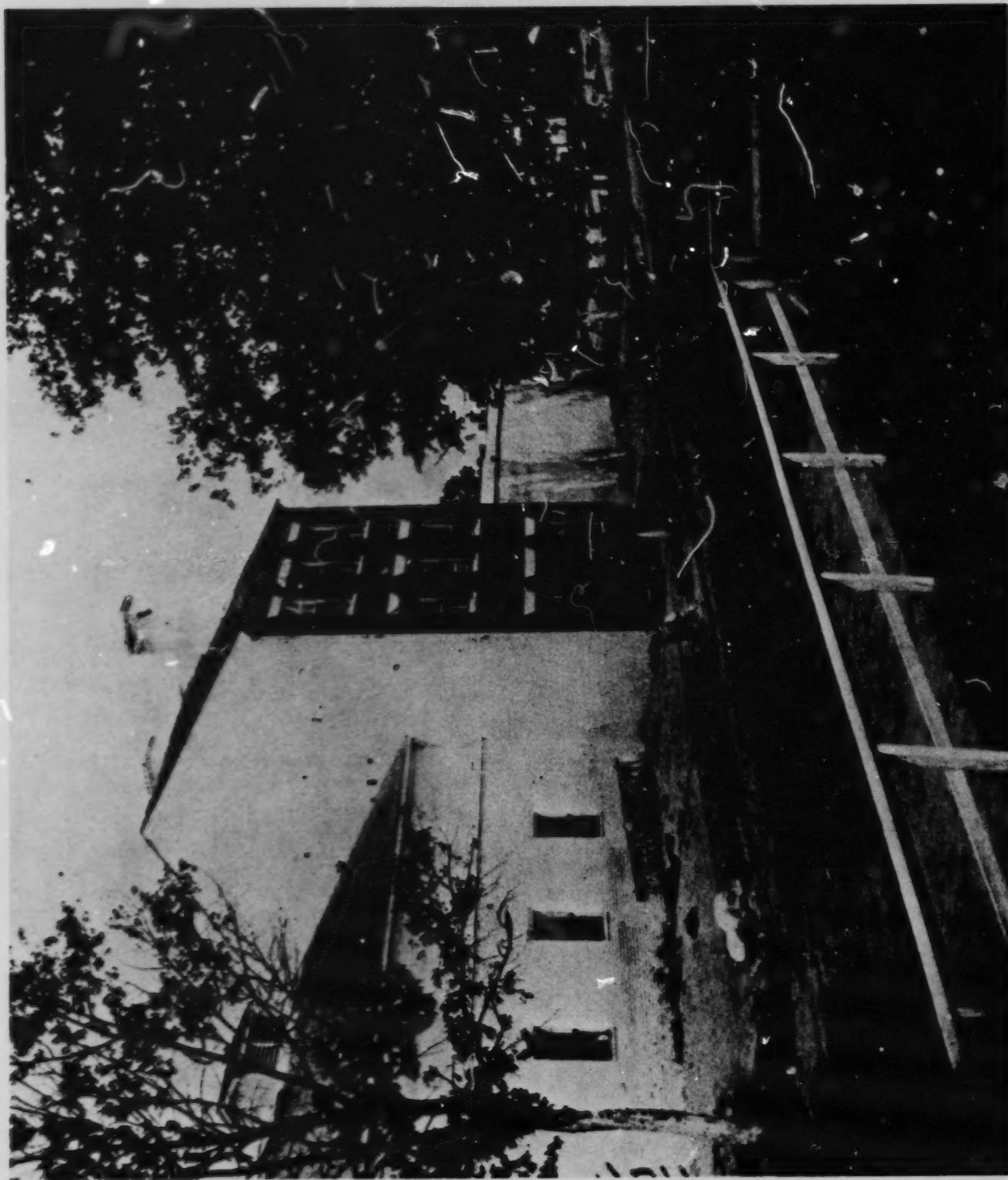
PROLOGUE

Lewis Bissell was born on February 13, 1842 in Pantam, Connecticut. He was the first of nine children born to Henry Benton Bissell, (born 1814), and his wife, Clarissa Wright Bissell, (born 1815). Henry was a prosperous farmer and life deacon in the Congregational Church of Litchfield. Before his marriage in 1841, he taught school. Deacon Bissell, as he was called, was a well respected and popular member of the community. Among his acquaintances were Henry Ward Beecher and his sister, Harriet.

At the time of his enlistment, Lewis had three brothers and three sisters. Two other sisters had died in infancy. His brothers were: Philip, (born 1843), Samuel, (born 1848), and Francis, (born 1852). His sisters were Alice, (born 1850) and the twins, Cornelia and Amelia, (born 1852). Being the oldest, much of the farm work fell upon Lewis. Philip, though close in age, may not have been able to do his full share of the work due to a severe burn to his hip he suffered as a child.

Lewis' education was spotty, and he attended a one-room schoolhouse infrequently during the winter months. Most of his time was spent performing the many chores needed to be done on the farm.

In April, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to help put down the rebellion of the Southern states. Lewis wanted to join a cavalry regiment but his father would not allow him to enlist. The next year, however, the situation had changed. The Union had suffered many setbacks, and another call for volunteers was issued.



"The Slave Pen", Alexandria, Virginia

PART I

ON GUARD

He (Lincoln) looks as if he could split rails
as well as Jeff Davis can split the Union.

Lewis Bissell

"Heavy Artillery Drill at Fort Richardson"



CHAPTER 1

A New Soldier (September 17, 1862-November 22, 1862)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In late summer of 1862, the situation was deteriorating for the Union. Twice defeats had been suffered at Bull Run, and in between these losses, McClellan's Peninsular Campaign had ended ingloriously. More men were needed in the army and since the states raised regiments to send to Washington, a flurry of recruiting activity broke out in Connecticut. Inducements were provided: the enlisting officer was awarded a commission if he could persuade forty men to join and the volunteer received a \$100 bonus for signing up for "three years or the duration of the war".

This time Henry Bissell could not prevent his son from enlisting. Lewis was twenty years old and many of his friends from his home town of Bantam and the nearby larger town of Litchfield were donning Union blue. On September 11, 1862, Lewis Bissell was mustered into the service of the United States Army as a private in the 19th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. He was assigned to Company A, made up of neighbors including his cousin, Lyman Smith, and led by the man who recruited him, Captain William Bissell, a distant relative. A civilian, Leverette W. Wessells, was appointed colonel of the regiment. Elisha S. Kellogg, a man with combat experience, was commissioned lieutenant colonel. Kellogg arrived directly from the front and provided the recruits with their first taste of army procedure.

As the regiment practiced formations on the rocky parade ground named Camp Dutton in Litchfield, Robert E. Lee was leading his Confederate force on an invasion of the North. And as Lewis Bissell was traveling to Washington, D.C. on his very first train ride, General George McClellan was battling Lee at Antietam (September 17, 1862).

After his arrival in Washington, Lewis camped briefly near the Capitol before being sent to a camp ground near Alexandria, Virginia, called "Shooters Hill". While there, he learned of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation which had an enormous impact on the war. He also learned a little about command changes in the Union army. His commander, Nathaniel Banks, was replaced by Samuel Heintzelman, and Bissell witnessed the ceremony. Of greater importance to the Union, however, were changes in the leaders of major Eastern and Western armies. In the West, Don Carlos Buell was succeeded by William Rosecrans after the former's poor performance at Perryville, Kentucky (October 8, 1862). In the East, George McClellan was removed from command and replaced by Ambrose Burnside.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. This first chapter of letters is very revealing about the character of Lewis Bissell and the society in which he was raised. As you read the letters, keep in mind the following questions which will serve as discussion guides and as a basis for written assignments.

What are Lewis Bissell's values? Some you will find in his letters, others you will find in the letters written by his parents. For this exercise, we will assume that Lewis holds the same values as his parents. In later letters, we will see to what extent this assumption was correct. Make a distinction when you discover a value as to whether it is one Lewis states, or one that his parents mention.

Some values are easy to uncover, others are not. For instance, in the letter dated September 18, 1862, Bissell describes his impressions of Washington, D.C., and when he mentions the Capitol dome and the monuments, he is revealing his values. There are occasions when Bissell comments on something and it is unclear as to what his feelings are. Pay attention to these because in later letters you will discover evidence of a definite opinion. After you assemble your list of values, you will want to categorize them.

How do Lewis Bissell's values compare to your own? How do his values compare to other young men in his community, New England, and in the North? How can you find evidence to help you draw a conclusion in an answer to these questions?

Northern Society. After you have read the letters in chapter one you should have a fairly good idea about what Lewis Bissell's community was like. What kinds of work did the people do? How well did they know one another? What kinds of things brought the community together? What issues divided them? Would you characterize the community as being homogenous or heterogeneous? How did one achieve stature in the community? After you have made a determination of what the community was like, point out how you feel it compares with your own community. Do you feel Litchfield was typical of New England or of the North? Which characteristics of Litchfield were common in Northern society?

Southern society had evolved into something quite different from the North. Compare and contrast elements of each society. Pay special attention to sense of community, economic base, and ways of achieving stature. What brought about the differences?

The Army. Army life was a departure from the rural farm community with which Lewis was familiar. In what ways is army life different for him? Lewis is being bombarded by new ideas, different people, and different values. How does he react to these? In what ways does Lewis try to transfer aspects of his community to the army? How successful is the attempt? In what ways does Lewis find security in his new environment?

ITEMS FOR IDENTIFICATION

Enfield: This was the type of rifle Lewis was issued. The other popular rifle was the Springfield. How did Civil War rifles differ from smoothbore muskets? How might this difference affect strategy and tactics?

Peninsular campaign: Was McClellan incompetent or hounded by the War Department?

paroled prisoners: Much different than what it means now?

Capsicum: A wonder drug?

draft: How did the draft law work within a state?

logtags: Grandmother Sally Bissell suggests these. Were they ever adopted during the Civil War?

Monitor: What was so important about this ship?

Millerites: What were they waiting for?

Crimean War: How well did Henry Bissell know his history?

English Intervention: The South wanted it; the North wanted to prevent it. Why was the North successful?

Adam's Express: Can you find out who owned this company?

Wine Plant: What in the world...?

confiscation: How widespread was it? Was property returned after the Civil War?

Contraband: How did black slaves get this name?

The New York Observer: What news did it observe?

Congregationalist: The Bissells belonged to this church.

Deacon: Henry Bissell held this position.

George McClellan: "Lincoln's Dilemma"?

Dan Sickles: "Crazy Dan"?

Joseph Hooker: "Fighting Joe"?

Ben Butler: "The Beast"?

Nathanial Banks: Can you be a politician and a good general?

Ambrose Burnside: There is a bridge named after him and whiskers.

Irvin McDowell: Unlucky or untalented?

Simon Cameron: Was he banished to Siberia?

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

Some questions worth further exploration are: What was the nature of the North and the South at the outbreak of the Civil War? Were their differences irresolvable? If not, explain the reason for the outbreak of hostilities?

A good source for this question is Edwin Rozwenc's, The Causes of the American Civil War. Men, Women, and Issues in American History Vol. I, edited by Howard Quint and Milton Cantor, contains many excellent articles that provide insight to the above question. The chapters by Charles Barker, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Charles Wiltse, and Emory Thomas are particularly useful.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain

This novel, published in 1889, starts out as a comic fable. Hank Morgan, the Connecticut Yankee, wakes up after a fight to find himself somehow transported from America in the 1870's to sixth century Arthurian England. There, he sets himself "the task of introducing the great and beneficent civilization of the nineteenth century, and of peacefully replacing the twin despotisms of royalty and aristocratic privilege with a Republic on the American plan" when Arthur shall have passed to his rest." In the course of the novel, the irony becomes clear.

In the letters studied in this chapter, you will become conscious of Bissell's admiration of the progress of technology and of the ingenuity and skill shown, for example, in the building of the Capitol Dome. Hank Morgan, as a master mechanic of the Colt Arms factory, is, in a sense, representative of this advancing technology. What values do he and Bissell share? Do they both admire the benefits of industrial technology? Compare and contrast the two characters, Bissell and Morgan, and ask yourself how each is, in his own way, representative of his society. In examining the societies these men represent, keep in mind that although they are close geographically, the societies are separated by time and economic base. Also, try to assess the role each character plays in his society due to occupation and age.

How does each character value individualism and family life? How does each deal with strangers and unexpected circumstances? In analyzing these characters, you should become conscious of two stereotypes. Which one do you identify with more closely? Is Bissell, a real character, in any way like a fictional character? In your analysis of the two individuals, you should find specific examples of their behavior to illustrate the different aspects of the characters. One particularly interesting question is, could Bissell ever become like Morgan?

Yankee is a satire. What examples of comedy and irony can you find? The purpose of satire is to expose some vice, folly, or corruption. What, therefore, was Twain's purpose in writing this novel? What is his vision of the nature of American society--and of man?

Two worlds are contrasted in this book; Arthurian feudal society and late nineteenth century America. One is a world of knight errantry and chivalry, a Romantic dream that is the stuff of myth and legend; the other is contemporary America, dynamic and individualistic. Both worlds are also ignorant and arbitrarily cruel, the rich and powerful ignoring the sufferings of the poor and weak. Is the Romantic vision of the past as much an illusion and denial of real conditions as the Arthurian legends? Is Twain thus, also, satirizing the Romantic and Gothic traditions in literature? Although he is not strictly a writer of the realistic genre, it seems that Twain is aware of the inadequacy of Romanticism to present the realities of contemporary American society. Implicit also is Twain's rejection of a Romantic attitude towards warfare.

This is also a story about power and war. Can you find any similarity between Twain's and Bissell's attitude towards war? Does either regard it as part of the natural condition of man? Examine the concepts and theories of social Darwinism and attempt to ascertain how much Twain might have been influenced by those ideas.

Twain's vision of the world in this novel is bleak and pessimistic. Write a short paper on the vision, or theme, of Yankee. Take into account the social and economic background of this particular approach to late Victorian American society, and research any aspects of Twain's life that might have prompted this bitter satire.



Diggs Homestead, Benton, Conn.

W. H. Brainard

Chapter 1

A New Soldier

(September 17, 1862-November 22, 1862)

Letter #1 (unedited)

Baltimor Sep 17th 10 AM
1862

Dear Parents

We are quartered
in the railroad depot All
is confusion Trains of freight
and passingers (and f) are
constantly comeing and going
A reg of cavalry from Penn
is waiting for orders to march
But I must begin at the
beginning of the journey (From)
+ the last good byes of the reg
wer spoken at Plymouth.
where a croud were assembled
at water bury the bands wer
playing and people cheering From
every house and cabbin handker
=chiefs and hats (wer waved) dish
cloths wer waved to us

(page 2)

we arrived to Brooklin
at 5 PM hot coffe crackers
and cheese was passed through
the cars we got int NY
at 6 PM got off and march-
-ed 4 miles to the boat crossed
over to Jercy citty got on
the cars at 11 at night every
thing passed along safe
untill day light when we
wer entering the city of
Burlington where the engine
and 2 cars run of the
track and hindered us 2
hours Arrived at Pheledelphi
at 9 AM Partook of a
good lunch with hot coffe
Onions salt beef chees &
bread after which we had a
a good wash Marched 2 ½ m
took the train for

(page 3)

Havre de (grass) grace
where we wer ferried a
a cross the Chesapeake which
was done by just drawing the
whole train onto the ferry
boat a man in the Sailes=
bury Co broke his leg on bord
the boat jumpping from one
car to the other. Pickets are
stationed every $\frac{1}{4}$ m along road
Arrived at Baltimore 1 PM
the 16th marched from one depot to
the other a distance of 4m to
where we are now. got a supper
of coffe salt beef bread & cheese
furnished by the loyal people of
the city We wer cheered by the
croud now and then people in
their knight clothes put their
heads out of the windows and
with flags in their hands

(page 4)

cheered us as we marched along
one rascal cheered for Jeff
Davis the Lieut. Col drew his
swaord and with one hand
shook the rascal out of his
boots & called for a police man
who came and marched him
off To the lock up The men are
forbidden to buy any cooked stuff
of the venders who are thick as
flies on a bowl of sugar The depot
building covers 1 acre of ground
The men are are writing talking
smoking eating peaches which
are as large as goose egges
Leonard was put on gard at
Litchfield and has not been
releived untill now the men
are all well and in good spirits
you will have to wate till we get
int camp before you write to me
a battle has come off at harpers fery
expect to start for Washington soon
From your son Lewis

H B Bissell

Washington, Sep. 18, 1862

Dear Parents,

I have arrived within sound of the enemies' cannon.

We were nine hours coming from Baltimore. Arrived here at ten at night and slept in the barracks.

This morning got leave from the Captain and took a walk with Leonard, Cables and Myron, down to the Capitol which is magnificent. No pen can describe it. To know what it is like you will have to come and see for yourselves.

I have slept for the past two nights on the soft side of a dirty floor.

I have forgotten to tell you about the Washington monument which is as natural as life. It is on the east side of the Capitol, in the center of the park. Whoever wishes to see Washington must take a look at this monument which is a wonderful piece of workmanship. The statue four times as large as life.

The Capitol dome is not completed yet. The masons are hewing large pillars of stone, two to three feet in diameter.

The park is as beautiful a spot on earth as you could ask to live in, with its fountains, walks and shade trees.

The Capitol dome beats my imagination and when completed will be a monument to ingenuity and skill that will be hard to beat.

I have been detailed to do guard duty and must leave this letter unfinished.

Sept. 20th--

I have delayed finishing my letter as yesterday I was too tired to write.

We left the barracks at ten A.M. The regiment started first and the guard brought up the rear on a quick march for a mile. Went without breakfast. Had nothing to eat but what I bought and a slice of bread a lady gave me.

We embarked on board the steamer Connecticut. Steamed down to Alexandria, marched one mile and bivouacked for the night in the old camp of the 11th Regt. Ct.

Started at 11 A.M. Friday morning and went west one mile to a side hill overlooking the city and the Potomac.

Several camps are in sight from here.

We have just drawn our guns and are to do provost duty in the city in place of a Mass. regiment. We expect to have our tents this afternoon. Have had to live on half rations.

Several of the boys in the 1st Ct. artillery Co. I are encamped two miles north in Fort Richardson.

Cousin Ed. Smith in Fort Worth and Jo. Vail met us at the wharf on Thursday. Came over to camp last night and stayed with us until this morning.

George W. Mason and Rother Potter made us a call. Have just left.

There are twenty thousand men encamped within twenty miles.

The country is destitute of fences as far as the eye can see. Close to our camp are the stumps of trees cut down by McClellan's army last winter.

The graves of soldiers are a stone's throw from our camp.

Several large forts are in sight. Cannons and baggage wagons are constantly passing through the city in different directions.

The country residences of the rich are shaded with noble trees. If the country around Alexandria was in Ct. it would be made into a garden. The soil is free from stones and rocks, is clayey but produces good corn and wheat.

Sweet potatoes were had for dinner. Peaches were plentiful but now are scarce--have to give two cents a piece--apples the same. Watermelons 10 and 15 cents.

Provisions are dear. Not much grain is raised around here.

Our tents have just arrived and the men are getting ready to pitch them. There are to be five men in a tent. Our mess is picked out--same as we had before--Myron, Cables, Leonard, Potter and myself.

The teams for the regiment are mules that were never harnessed until Friday. They had high times in breaking them in--but they behave very well--kick and thrash around some.

We are in good spirits and well.

A good spring of water is close by. The water is almost as good as that of old Ct.

We have plenty of parade ground now and no stones to stumble over.

Tell the cousins and friends I am well as ever. Was rather tired and slept like a log with no covering but my blankets. Use my knapsack for a pillow.

We will stay here for some time to come.

Direct your letters to

Lewis Bissell

Co. A 19th Reg Washington

Care of Captain Bissell

P.S. Write soon all of you. This is for all the family. Give my love to my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins.

Found that I had skipped this page and will fill it up with something.

Last night the cars ran all night--carried 2500 troops and large quantities of munitions of war. Every night steamers loaded with troops are moved down to Fortress Monroe.

Stragglers from almost every regiment in the army pass by to the convalescent camp. There are about 15,000 stragglers and paroled prisoners here. Many of them barefoot with nothing but shirt and pants to their backs and legs.

Whiskey is the beverage in the city. Last night a barrel, covered with straw, was found in a cart. The guard fetched it to the marshal's office for safe keeping.

Stragglers are taken up every night and if found drunk taken to the slave pen.

Please write for I have not received any letters from home yet.

Letter #3

Camp near Alexandria, Sept. 30, 1862

Dear Father,

I received your note of the 25th with pleasure. The first news that I have received from home.

I saw the death of little Samuel in the paper but did not know Mrs. Kilbourn was dead. Tell aunt and uncle that I sympathize with them in their loss.

I saw Sam Merriman yesterday. Did not know him at first. He is as brown as an Indian--looks tough and healthy. His quarters are in Fort Richardson two miles north of us.

Cousin Ed. Smith I have not seen yet but shall the first chance. Lyman saw him last week. He was busy then. Said he would come and see us the first chance he could get.

Have you finished the barn cellar yet? Have you had any frost yet?

I want to have mother and all of you, write.

We have to do provost guard duty in the city once in three days. I was on guard last night at the marshal's office. Was relieved this morning and as I do not have to drill this morning am spending the time writing.

There is a large convalescent camp within gun shot of our camp where paroled prisoners are sent who have been released from prison in rebeldom.

Have seen and talked with several of them who say that if Gen. McClellan had been reenforced with 5000 men when he asked for them and could have had command of McDowell's division they would have marched in triumph into Richmond and we the 19th would never have been called.

Several of the 5th C. V. have been to camp. They are just from Richmond and tell hard stories of the rebels. These men say the rebels are the most desperate men they ever saw--to fight.

We do not know what is going on much more than you do.

There have been three deaths since I left home. The very night that we arrived at our present camp, four soldiers were buried within speaking distance of camp. Hardly a day passes but what we hear the volleys fired over the graves. Two were buried last night.

Theodore F. Vaill who was on guard in the city was detailed, as an escort, to a soldier's funeral.

Leonard found an old friend from Wisconsin in the convalescent camp yesterday.

While I am writing I can hear the cannon firing in the forts.

Jo. Vaill came to camp this morning. Says he is to start for his regiment this afternoon.

Provisions fetch a high price--cheese 18 cents per pound--butter 20 cents--apples three for 5 cents--peaches from 1 to 4 cents apiece.

If mother wants any help there are plenty of contrabands here--stout as horses--will carry a bushel of grain on their heads.

Give my best respects to all the friends and love to brothers, sisters and mother.

From your son

Lewis Bissell

Letter #4

(Oct. 10, 1862)

Dear Son Lewis

We are very glad to hear from you again and to hear you are

well and getting along comfortably. You need not think we forget about you if we do not write as punctual as you wish. I do not think an hour of the day passes but what I think of you and wish we might hear some favorable news--that we might hear that this terrible war would soon come to an end.

The week you left was a very sad one to us. Besides parting with you we were called to attend the funeral of little Sammy.

He was a very dear child to his parents and grandparents being their only one. They feel very sad and lonely without him but are comforted with the thought that he has gone to a better world where he is in no pain, sickness or suffering and where he will be forever with his Saviour and his God.

Could we have this comforting assurance respecting you if called to part with you by death? We know not what a day may bring forth and therefore we ought to try to live in the fear and love of God and be prepared for whatever may befall us.

We know not to what temptations you are exposed but hope and pray you may be kept from the vices and sins of camp. Hope you find time to read in your Testament every day if you read but little.

We have sent you one N. Y. Observer. There are many good pieces in them which I think you will like to read. We can send you one every week if you like.

Does Mr. Cables have prayer in the tent now? Give my best wishes to him Leonard and Myron and tell them that as they are professors of religion I hope they may do good among the soldiers, especially in their own tent.

Does the chaplain go about among the men and try to get acquainted with them? Does he preach every Sunday?

You do not write anything about your clothes and so I suppose they are well enough. How do you like your woolen stockings and boots in such a warm climate? Do you do your own washing and how often do you wash? You must keep yourself clean as you can for I think it will be for your health.

If there is anything you want you must let us know and maybe we will have an opportunity of sending it to you. If your clothes rip or need mending, you must do it at once if you can for you know a "Stitch in time saves nine".

Mrs. Johnson came in here yesterday. She says there is trouble between her and George--that he is jealous of her and wished her to come and see him and clear up the charges against her.

I do not know but they will be asking you some questions about her. You must be very cautious what you say about her if they do.

I do not know anything but what she has behaved with propriety and I do not know as you do. For that reason say as little as you can if asked anything. You must not say anything about this to anyone and do not let them know I have written you about it.

It has been a long time since I have written a letter and it tires my hand very much. The pen I have to write with is very poor and as it is getting very late I must stop writing and bid you goodbye.

From you dear mother
Clarissa Bissell

Litchfield, Oct. 10, 1862

Dear Brother,

I thought I would write you a few lines. I don't know as they will be very interesting to you.

How do you get along down there? Are you homesick yet? We are all well.

I went down to Bantam today and Mrs. Pond said that Mr. McNeil said that he would furnish the barrels and pay the freight to New York if the rest would furnish the apples to send down to your regiment. The school was closed last Tuesday. We had pictures for presents. The larger girls gave the teacher a present. It was a brown willow flower basket with a brim. The edge of the basket in the shape of pleats. It has a handle and was filled with flowers.

Dick and Sam Pond made her a present of a sewing bird.

We have had some very warm weather this week. Wednesday the thermometer was up to 80 and Tuesday to 78 degrees. But today it is quite cool and rainy.

There are going to be a great many chestnuts this year. We are going to pick up a good many and send some down to you if we have a chance.

Father has brought home your picture and we think it very good indeed.

I cannot stay to write any more for it is almost night. Please answer my letters.

From your affectionate sister
Alice

Dear Lewis,

I don't know what to write as the rest have written. We have husked seven loads of corn and dug ten bushels of potatoes.

I hope you will shoot Jef if you can or old Bury.

We are glad for your songs and I wish I had "Union Forever" and "Hark to Arms" but you need not trouble yourself.

Yours
Sam

Dear Son,

The children have all, but Neal and Meal, written to you.

I perceive by their epistles that there is little for me to write.

We received yours on Wednesday eve the 8th inst. Thank you so much for writing. Your letter was very interesting.

Horetta was here today and borrowed the songs to read to Charles and Caroline. The map I have not had time to examine.

Our farming business gets along slowly.

On Monday last after voting for town officers, I drove to Woodbury and carried the Rev. Mr. Robinson, Julia Vaill and Eliza Winters. Mrs. Robinson (Clara Vaill) was a little unwell and did not go. They stopped at the parsonage in the South Society which is a beautiful place. The house is very prettily furnished, etc.

Last Sabbath the Rev. Mr. Beebee of New Haven preached in the morning in behalf of the Bible Society. The collection for that object amounted to \$97.00. It was a good collection.

In the afternoon Mr. Robinson preached. Mr. Richards was in

Washington for Mr. Lyman.

When you write again please tell us what religious exercises you have in camp.

Is the Rev. Mr. Wainright with the Regt.? Do you have prayers in your tent?

In your letter you mentioned the number of graves Mr. Cable counted in the soldier's burying ground. He observed none from Ct.

How are the soldiers buried? Are their graves marked? If so how is it done? Is their name, age, Regt, State, etc. inscribed? If so, on what and with what? Have you visited the hospital yet? Do the sick have things that add to their comfort or do they have just their medicine and nothing more?

Phillip says it belongs to me to enquire about your financial affairs. You wished for two or three dollars. I send you two dollars. If at any time you want more you must let me know.

You will find it hard to be deprived of many things. Yet they are so costly that you can hardly afford to buy them. If you will buy things that are for your health or will give a relish to your rations we think it will be best.

What are your rations now? Are they the same you had in Camp Dutton or are they not so good. Please write us what you have for dinner, supper and breakfast that is if it is different from what you had in Camp Dutton. We often wish, when we are gathered at the table, that you were at home to share with us.

We are busy drying apples. Aunt Julia Smith thinks that they will be good to send to you. You can stew them and add a little sugar and eat them for dessert. (You wrote that sugar was so much per lb. Do you have to buy it or is it furnished you as a part of your rations?)

Please ask Mr. Cables and cousin Leonard if they think it best to send some dried apples to you.

Mr. McNeal spoke of sending some bbls. of apples to the Regt. but I have not seen him. If it should be done I should most cheerfully assist in so doing. I wish you had a bbl. or so of apple sauce made with pretty strong boiled cider. Do you think it would keep and not ferment, if made very strong, before reaching you and would it be relished by the boys generally? Just ask Leonard, Mr. Cables and Mr. Bishop about it.

We think that you are being drilled so much and inspected that you may not remain long in Alexandria. Still this is mere conjecture.

How are your clothes? Are they wearing out much? Have you had to mend them any? Do your boots stand it pretty well? Is Albert Peck one of the ragged ones of the regiment or does he keep neat, aside from tobacco?

I will send some paper that you can use. If you want any postage stamps, we can supply you.

Be very careful of your health. Have you used any of the Capsicum?

Read daily in the Psalms and Testament and if there are prayer meetings in the camp, attend them if you can. Associate as much as you can with the soldiers that are Christians and constantly "strive to enter in at the straight gate".

Aunt Julia has written to you. Perhaps we shall hear from

you in your answer to her.

Yours most affectionately,
Henry B. Bissell

Oct. 11, 1862

Letter #6

Litchfield, Oct. 17, 1862

Dear Grandson,

Having a few leisure moments this afternoon I sit down to write a few lines to you.

We are all well as usual and all very busy. Your Grandpa and Charlie are gathering the winter apples which are very good. I wish you could have some of them.

My brother, Myron, was here this morning. Said they had sold a hundred bushels and had as many more to sell at 20 cents per bushel.

We all attended the missionary meeting on Wednesday of this week. We had a very good meeting. Mr. Swan was there but I don't think he is ahead of Mr. Richards.

When we got in town that morning they were having a wedding at the Episcopal Church. Riverius Marsh and a Miss Hempstead were married.

Your folks are all well and all the rest of the neighbors.

How are you getting along? Do you have enough to eat? We heard you were put on pork and bread and thought you would fare hard on that. But I must stop for it is time to get supper.

I have got a better pen and will try to write a little more.

Last evening your folks and others went down to Keeney's store and filled a barrel with things to send to your tent. I hope they will get there safely and you will enjoy the contents.

They had a Democratic oyster supper down at Morse's store last evening. That party carried the day, the first Monday in October and they rejoice over it greatly. They want to carry the state and have a Democratic governor and end this war and the like.

They have got to draft 66 men from this town if they do not enlist before the 27th of this month. Morris has got to have 26. The governor calls for eight hundred more to fill out regiments that are not full.

It is very pleasant weather. There has not been frost enough to kill the tomatoe vines.

Our folks have got in all their corn and it is all husked. Your father has gone after a load of his this afternoon.

Tell Leonard they went over and made the fence one day this week. His family and Aunt Eunice were well.

Have heard today that Mr. Hotchkiss was married to a widow lady in Naugatuc. Hope he has done better than the last time he was married.

I have not much to write that will be very interesting to you.

I suppose you have several letters from home which told you what was going on. We don't get much war news at present.

We have not heard from your Uncle Fred in some time. I suppose they know more about the war than we do.

I suppose you heard they George Boothe was dead.

Charley was reading last evening that every soldier ought to have a card in his knapsack with his name and native place on it in case they were wounded or in any way not able to tell. They might inform their friends. Aunt Julia thinks it a very good idea.

It is getting almost night again. We thank you for your letter. Your grandpa says he cannot write now but sends his respects to you.

Write as often as you can for we all feel interested in your welfare. Please excuse all mistakes and bad writing for I have not written much of late and my old fingers are stiff.

Yours respectfully,
Sally Bissell

Letter #7

(Oct. 12-18, 1862)

Dear Mother:

I was very glad to receive a letter from you and will do the best I can to answer it.

I am as comfortably off here as I was in Camp Dutton. We do not have as many visitors but more drill until lately. Some two hundred are detailed for guard duty every day which makes the companies so small that it does not pay to have battalion drill.

We have to get up at daylight, have breakfast at sunrise so that the city night guard can be relieved so they can get breakfast.

I have been up every other night for the past week but have had the next day for rest.

Mr. Wainwright has spent most of his time in the hospitals--has not preached since we left Camp Dutton. Last Sunday was cold and stormy so there were no religious services except prayer at dress parade. Mr. Wainwright has not been with the regiment much as yet. We read in the Testament and have prayers when we have time, after roll call.

I was very glad to get the New York Observer and would like it every week. The Hartford Current would be read with pleasure if you or grandpa will send it. I would be very much obliged and then I would know what other Connecticut regiments are doing and where they are.

My clothes are in good order. I have not worn my woolen stockings much. Will wear the old cotton ones as long as I can. The weather has been so warm that thin stockings are more comfortable than thick ones.

I get a woman to wash my shirts. She does it very well and irons them at a cost of 5 cents for shirts and 3 cents for stockings. I wash my handkerchiefs.

Apollos Buell is sick and in the hospital but is getting better and will be about soon.

Dr. Plumb is a very good nurse and takes good care of the sick. A good many are grunting and if they can get the doctor to excuse them from duty crawl into their tents and play cards or sleep.

None in Co. A. can fool Lieut. Wadhams that way. We have the healthiest company in the regiment. We would not part with Lieut. Wadhams for love or money. He is the best line officer in the regiment. I would not exchange the major for him. He knows

his business and lightens the men's burden all he can. His experience is worth everything to us and he shows the men all he can.

The colonel says that Co. A. is the best drilled and best behaved company in the regiment. George Bradley is praised as being the best and neatest cook in the regiment.

If you can send pickles I would like some for they are healthy and help make poor vitual's taste good.

There is a man here from Morris by the name of Peck. He is in company with a man named Davis. They are dealers in groceries and have an agent in New York City. He (Peck) says he thinks he can bring freight from New York to Alexandria for 50¢ a barrel. He has a large warehouse in the city and will store any freight for the company free of charge. I will give you his address.

52 South Street
Care of Peck and Davis
Alexandria, Va.

This Peck was in company with some of the Morris merchants.

How does Mrs. Osborne get along now? Please give my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Osborne and to Ben Johnson. Does Mary Merriman stay with her mother?

Write again. Tell all the friends to write also. Give my love to grandpa's folks.

From your affectionate son
Lewis

Papa wished to know about the soldiers' grave yard.

It has a very neat picket fence around it. Mr. Cables counted 350 graves. There are three rows--one hundred in each row.

The soldiers are buried in good pine coffins. A detachment of eight men with a corporal march, with arms reversed, in front of the coffin, which is followed by comrades of the deceased. They march with slow step to the mournful music of the drums and fife. When a minister can be had a prayer is made at the grave. After the coffin is lowered three volleys are fired over the grave. Each grave has a white pine board with an iron around the top to keep it from splitting. The name, regiment, company, state and age are on it so that friends can find them without trouble.

The grave yard is south of the city. Each grave is smoothed off and the whole is a model of neatness which Litchfield ought to pattern after.

I will write to Phill and Frank soon.

Dear Brother Sam,

Your short and blunt epistle came with the rest and I read it by the picket fire.

Lieut. Wadhams arrested a drunken major the other night for disorderly conduct in the city.

I have not seen seven loads of corn in Virginia. They tell me there are not forty rods of fence between here and Bull Run. Thousands of acres of woodland have been cut over by McClellan's Army.

The songs I sent you I gave 5¢ for. Mr. Locke who wrote them sang them for the regiment. He is a very good singer. The song Marching to Richmond Mr. Locke wrote in the top of a tree within sight of the spires of Richmond.

Yours,

Lewis

Dear Little Neal and Meal,

I must not leave you out but will write you a letter together. As I do not have time to print it so you can read it yourselves you must get Papa or Mother to read it to you.

I have seen some little black girls down here who will carry a basket of chips on their heads as easy as you can in your hands. They are dressed in old ragged dresses and wear handkerchiefs for bonnets.

You must not plague mother but help her all you can so she can have time to sew and rest.

If you are good girls I will write you a letter so you can read it.

From your brother,
Lewis

Letter #8

Camp near Alexandria
Oct. 18, 1862

Dear Father,

I received your letters the evening of the 12th just after supper, and as I was going on picket duty I did not have time to read them until I reached my post. Almost burnt my hands and face reading them by the fire that Theodore Sanford had built.

We have to stand on picket and patrol guard twelve hours at a time. Two men are stationed in one place to relieve each other. It takes 150 men to guard the city.

You wished to know what are our rations. We have good bread, salt pork and beef, rice, molasses and coffee.

While writing, the order has been issued to be ready to fall in at two minutes' notice.

The 36th Mass. which is camped two miles west of us slept on their arms last night.

Cannon in all the forts around have been loaded. Troops are moving very rapidly around Washington.

More major and brigadier generals have been in Washington than in a year. The generals are expecting a night raid by rebel cavalry.

All of our cavalry has been ordered to the front. One rebel captain was brought in prisoner today. The enemy is in strong force near Leesburg.

The orders have created quite a stir in camp.

But to return to where I left off. We do not have any potatoes now. We have bought sweet potatoes and onions which with rice make a very good soup.

We have for breakfast coffee, bread and meat. For dinner potatoes or soup. For supper rice, molasses, bread and coffee.

We buy tomatoes and eat them with sugar. They make a very good sauce.

Sugar is 12¢ per pound in the city.

Leonard says that dried apples are very good indeed. Dry all you can and if I don't eat them others will.

We buy some sugar--a pound will last me ten days.

I can tell you that you can send all the dried apples you wish. I do not know whether you could send a bbl. of apple sauce but will find out whether it will keep on the journey. The sauce would be relished by the boys very much.

My clothes are in very good order. I have clothes enough for the present. As cold weather comes on I shall want wrappers. My boots stand very well. The soles are wearing thin from marching on the pavements. I can get them mended almost any time.

You can send postage stamps for they are as good as money in the Regt.

I have used some of the capsicum and find it very good.

Things look now as if we should stay here all this winter but this is mere conjecture.

Mr. Cables has seen one of William's tent mates who has been sick and is now in the convalescent camp. He left the Regt. six weeks ago and is waiting to go back to it.

From your affectionate son
Lewis Bissell

Dear Sister Alice,

Your letter was received and read with pleasure. I was glad to hear from you and hope you won't be lazy but help mother all you can.

I have not seen many girls down here. There are quite a large number of contrabands in the city. Some of them live in tents--some in shanties.

The men work for the government loading and unloading ships and stowing away munitions of war.

Alexandria is one of the largest government depots in the U.S.

Our camp is just west of the city. About as far as from Mr. Osborn's house to our house. The railroad to Bull Run is about as far as to grandpa's glass barn. Trains are running at all times of day and night.

I received a letter by the same mail from cousin Mary Ferris.

Have you seen Aunt and Uncle Perkins lately or heard from them? Leonard wants you to make Lottie a visit.

The Monitor is at the Washington navy yard. She has had a new gun which carries a ball weighing 350 pounds. The report can be heard twelve or fourteen miles.

What is Ida and Hatt doing now days? Please remember me to them and all the rest of the neighbors and write again as soon as you please.

From your affectionate brother
Lewis Bissell

Letter #9

Headquarters 19th Regt. C.V.
Camp near Alexandria, Va.
Oct. 25, 1862

Dear Father:

You will want to know whether the barrel arrived and when. We received the barrel Friday noon, the 24th, safe and uninjured save one head which was stove in when it was loaded onto the wagon to bring it over to camp.

We rolled it into our little tent while eager eyes peered in through the tent door to see what the barrel contained.

We knocked the head in without ceremony. The first thing that we came to was some cakes and a bag to put the dried apples in--then the butter and cheese and clear down to the bottom.

The apple sent by Mr. Kilbourn to Myron was shown to Lieut. Wadhams. He thought the motto a very good one.

We had as good a dinner as you could ask for of soup, bread and butter. It made all of us think of home more than once before we got through dinner.

William Hall tents next to us and came in and ate dinner with us. He said that such a dinner made him feel homesick. Before night he and Capt. Bissell received a barrel from Milton.

The dried apples were very good. We had some stewed for breakfast. Mr. Cables said they tasted delicious. The cheese we had not cut when I left camp for city duty. I would not exchange one pound of the butter for a half dozen pounds of the best butter you can buy in the market down here. The dried apples are very useful to us and in the hospital. The vinegar in the pickles leaked out a little but did not do any hurt.

We think of getting a box and digging a cellar to put it in and keep butter, etc. The barrel we shall head up and send to Mr. Peck's store for safe keeping so if we should move it can be sent to us when we want the things in it.

You asked in your letter what would be the most useful to us. I will tell you in another letter.

Corporal Hinsdale received a barrel of apples at the same time. They were bruised some but very good.

Words are too feeble to thank you and others for the good things you sent us. We shall not forget the barrel very soon and will remember its contents long after they are gone.

As something has been going on since I last wrote I will copy from my journal.

"Oct. 22--This morning was very windy. Clouds of dust filled the air as does snow on a very windy day in winter.

About half past 8 A.M. a company of cavalry and a regiment passed by the camp and went into the city. Soon after that another regiment, camped to the west of us near the R.R. and another belonging to Maj. Gen. Sickles brigade began to pass close by our camp. They went to a large open field, north of us and the city, about a mile.

A company of pioneers carrying axes in slings marched in front. Next came the music then the colonel and staff officers.

After the first regiment came a battery of light artillery of six guns. Each gun was drawn by six heavy horses. Then more regiments to the number of ten or twelve. Some of them, I should think were a thousand strong, some numbered four or five hundred. There were five batteries of cannon and one of howitzers which throw anything you can put in them. Cavalry brought up the rear.

At eleven Col. Wessells and staff left for the city leaving Capt. Ells in command of the regiment.

I found out that the troops were to be reviewed by Gen. Banks and the president.

Soon after the first regiment had passed by we could see them forming in line of battle in the large field. The very same field on which McClellan reviewed the 75000 last spring.

As regiment after regiment formed in line the ambulance wagons began to pass. I don't know how many of them were there. Some were drawn by four horses, some by one and some by two.

After everything was ready the president accompanied by Gen. Banks, Sickles, Hooker and Brig. Gen. Slough with their respective staffs and the president's body guard were greeted with a national salute. One for the president and one for Banks.

The troops then prepared for review--that is they opened ranks so that the president could ride in between them.

After the president had ridden along the lines he took a position on a little knoll so that he could see the whole army. The troops then marched by, the colors of each regiment dipping as they passed the president and party. After the troops had marched in review they formed in line and gave three cheers for the president and three more for the Union.

The president and generals with Colonels Wessells and Kellogg rode through the convalescent camp and stopped a few moments to take in the view of the surrounding scenery. They turned their horses' heads toward our camp and down they came on a gallop. The president and Col. Wessells came first, next Banks and Lieut. Col. Kellogg, next Majors Smith and Howard, next Generals Sickles and Slough, after them more generals and colonels and last of all the body guard.

We were taken by surprise but I got a good look at "Father Abraham", Gen. Hooker, Gen. Banks, also Gen. Sickles. He rode with a drawn sword he being the commanding general for the day.

The president wore a plain suit of clothes. Had a stovepipe hat on his head. Has the same look on his face as you see in his pictures.

He looks as if he could split rails as well as Jeff Davis can split the Union.

When we cheered he took off his hat and made a very polite bow in acknowledgment. He rode a splendid chestnut colored horse.

Gen. Banks, I did not have a sight of but Gen. Hooker took off his hat and cheered with the rest.

The presidential cavalcade passed on--they did not spend five minutes in camp.

Since then we have settled down and things go on the same as ever. Yesterday afternoon George Baldwin came to camp and stayed all night. Says that he saw you a few days before he left home. Says you are all well.

Leonard Hosford was here Tuesday. He stayed all night.

Today I am on patrol duty. Am stationed at an engine house along with Myron. We had some bread and butter and cakes for dinner. The engine house was once a foundry but it belonged to a "secessh" and was confiscated. Tracks were laid down and now six engines are in here. They are large ones--40 horse power.

There are 17 of the Regt. in the hospital. Some are sick but none dangerously. I shall give them some of the dried apples which are very good.

My space is nearly full. It is raining today. Have had some frost. Give my love to all and tell the family to answer my last letters--if they please. I am in good health.

From your son
Lewis Bissell

Letter #10

Litchfield, Oct. 29, 1862

Dear Lewis,

We received your letter of the 18th inst. last Wednesday Eve. We have neglected to answer too long. One has waited for the other so that the old saying is proved true "What is everybody's business is nobody's".

In writing a letter we sometimes feel that it is hard starting. It is so in the present instance.

We are all well. All the neighbors are well. William Plumb is so much unwell that I think it is doubtful if he joins the Regt. at present. He cannot labor long without being quite exhausted.

Lyman Sweet of the 8th Regt. C. V. arrived in town last Saturday. Was discharged by the surgeon of the hospital. Yesterday he went into the Lecture Room and took his old seat with the Sabbath School Class and every eye was turned to see him. He lived with Mrs. Hadsell. Do you remember him?

Florence Dudley rides out sometimes in pleasant weather but her health is no better than when you left.

I do not expect to write much about the work on the farm as Phillip is writing on the other side of the table to you about cider, turnips, apples, etc. He has a great flow of intellect from the brain just now, much as "Old Spencer" used to have from the udder in her bettermost days which you will recollect was very large.

He is a very good boy and is striving to fill both his place and yours which he does admirably at times but is always in bed. He thinks that his most efficient place. But I ought not to joke a boy with such a sore back as he has.

The weather is quite cool for October. The ground has been frozen for several nights. We have had but little rain since you left and the springs, streams and wells are very low. We are expecting heavy rains before the setting in of winter.

Major Beebee died last year on the 18th of Nov. and it was warmer then than now. P.S. Beebee told me that he had a letter from Ge. W. Mason on Saturday last.

We have heard that the president received your Regt. and that you gave him three cheers. As I never yet saw a live president will you write and tell me all about his reception and appearance. I have great confidence in him and had I been there would have cheered as heartily as any one. May God bless and guide that noble man in this time of national trouble.

Mr. Richards prays for him every Sabbath. He also remembers the young men that have gone so recently from our midst (the 19th Regt.) in his prayers. We do not forget you

when we are gathered at our Sabbath Evening Prayer Meetings. We think of you and Myron and Mr. Cables and it is with an affectionate interest for your spiritual and eternal good that our prayers are offered up to a covenant--keeping God.

Be careful of your health. I am afraid that being out so much nights will be a great disadvantage to you in that respect.

Oct. 30, Thursday morning--

Late in the afternoon yesterday I saw Warren Bissell. He was just from the cars--left Alexandria the night before. Saw him but a moment--said he saw you and that you were well, etc.

How is Capt. Bissell and Apollo Buell? How is Whiting Smith? I heard that Beebee Hall was not very well. Please write all about the sick ones and the well ones too, for we should like to hear from all.

By yesterday's mail I received an envelope marked Portland, Maine containing a wedding card which I cannot enclose but will copy for you.

Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Vaill
At Home
November 11th and 12th
36 Park Street

Also another card marked

Charlotte M. Stundiven

By these cards I suppose they are expecting to be married at that time and this being directed to "Henry B. Bissell and Family" is an invitation to the wedding, so you can see if you can be present at that time. You will be a welcome and invited guest.

Respecting Peck and Davis of Alexandria, Mr. Peck is a son of Mr. Sidney Peck of Morris and as I understand is about 30 years old. Mr. Davis' parents live in Watertown, he is a younger man and is now in Morris visiting a young lady--a Miss Harrison. They are intending to be married before he returns.

Mr. Farnam gives me this information. Says he saw Mr. Davis night before last.

Francis sends his love to you and says he will write to you next time. Remember me to Leonard and to all your tent mates. I saw Charlotte returning from school yesterday. Miss Sarah Bissell teaches on the "Plain".

With much love, I am yours affectionately,

H. B. Bissell

Letter #11

(Oct.30, 1862)

To Lewis Bissell from his mother--first part missing

if the things were not properly packed. Perhaps you can give some information how it would be best. I shall send you some pickles if I have a chance.

You wrote about wrappers. Do you wish them sent at first opportunity? You will need some gloves or mittens or both. If you want us to send them you must write and also if you wish a finger to the mitten so that I can get them knit.

I have been from home but a few times since you left.
Mary Ferris has made us a visit. Stayed three nights. I went with her to grandpas and found a room full of cousins. Mrs. Louisa Judd from Michigan, formerly lived in New Milford, Mrs. Lewis Guild and daughter Addie from Amenia (they have left Bethlehem) Mrs. Chas. Wheeler and daughter and Aunt Laura Guild.

Mrs. Earl Guild is very sick with fever. It is doubtful if she lives long.

We have not been to Warren yet.

Harley was taken sick, the day little Sammie was buried, with inflammation of the bowels and has been very sick. Got a little better and then had a billious fever. Is some better--gaining slowly.

We have not been to New Milford and I am afraid we will not go this fall. I suppose Cousin Ellen will move into her new house soon as it is nearly finished.

Are there many of the regiment in the hospital that you know of?

I have heard that Mr. Wm. Buell and Miss Harriet Newcomb will visit camp, where you are, soon.

Aunt Melissa, Cousin Melissa, and Augusta's wife and little girl made us a visit. She is a very pretty woman and appears much better than Gustas.

I told Melissa what you wrote about her writing to you. She said she would write.

I told Lawrence he must write. He said something was wrong with his education when he was young and he could not write a letter. If he should, it would be the greatest curiosity of modern times and set the whole regiment laughing if they should see it.

I cannot think of much to write that will interest you.

Grandpa Bissell made me a present of a new black silk dress last summer. I do not think that I told you of it. I got Mrs. P. Pond to cut and make it for me. It is a good one and I like it very much but when I think of you and what the poor soldiers have suffered and will have to suffer, I care but little for nice clothes.

Write every week if you have time.

I have written more than I thought I should when I commenced. It is now one o'clock at night.

From your mother,
C. Bissell

Letter #12

Headquarters 19th Regt. C.V.
Camp near Alexandria, Va.
Nov. 3, 1862

Dear Father,

Your letter came to hand last Saturday afternoon. Was very glad to hear from home.

It seems you had not received my last letter giving a description of the president, when you wrote. Since then things have gone on the same as usual only we have been very busy of late. So many of the men are excused from duty by the surgeons that it makes it rather hard for the well ones.

Last Sunday it was cold and stormy--rained very hard in the morning but stopped before noon. A great many of the men caught cold and have been off ever since. Some have been quite sick and have had sore throats.

Dr. Gibbs is sick in his tent but says he is getting better--caught cold last Sunday. John Bishop is getting better fast--is in my tent making himself comfortable. Apollo Buell is out of the hospital. He has a good appetite and says that he is gaining fast.

Last night Daniel Lyman of Co. C passed through the gates of death for the eternal world. Last Friday night he got up deranged, put on his clothes and a pair of slippers and went out with nothing on his head. His tent mates missed him at roll call but believed him to be in some other street and thought no more about it until breakfast when they began to look about camp. Someone saw him walking about outside of camp with the cape of his overcoat over his head. When they brought him into camp he did not know where he was. He began to sink rapidly Saturday. Sunday he was deranged and breathed his last at 8 o'clock last eve. I was on picket at the time. Theodore V. told me this morning when he came to relieve me. When I got to camp they had taken the corpse to the city to be embalmed. His father arrived in camp at 10 today.

Corp. Frederick Webster is not expected to live 24 hours. He caught cold last Sunday. Stayed away from the hospital too long. Geo. Mason telegraphed to his father last night that he was not expected to live long. Mason is up taking care of him.

Last Monday cousin Ed. Smith came to camp. He looks well and is as nearly as fleshy as ever. He is in Ft. Worth, the next fort to Ellsworth. You will find it on the map. It is two miles from here.

The 153rd N.Y. has camped south of us on the old camp of the 23rd Mass.

Tuesday evening at 9 o'clock and the next day, Wednesday, I received a visit from Edwin Bissell. He is a tailor by trade. Goes with the Hospital Department. Is about 57 years of age. He is a native of Litchfield. Left when he was 17 years of age. Has not seen it since. He knows the roads and the people that lived there when I asked him their names. He says he worked for Grandpa Bissell when he was a boy. He lives in Monroe Co. N. Y. His father and old John Bissell were either cousins or brothers. I have forgotten which. He said that he had a written genealogy of his family but has lost it. He has looked for it but could not find it. Has two boys in the 1st N.Y. Regt. The oldest died before Richmond. The youngest is a general guide in the 71st. Is seventeen years of age. I have been waiting for an opportunity to see him again but have not as yet.

Since I commenced this letter an order has come to the effect that after today we are through with picket duty. Good for us.

I shall have to ask you to send me \$4.00 more. I do not like to ask for it, much less to spend it. But as I have had to be out nights more of late I have used more money than I should otherwise.

I should like some postage stamps, also I shall want a pair of good buckskin gloves--and a pair of mittens with a forefinger.

The letter paper I am very glad to get as I was nearly out.

Thanks to you for sending it.

Last Saturday we drew our dress coats. They are not as thick as I wish they were. Shall have mine lined in back as it is not lined now.

Mother can send it better than I can buy it in the city. I can get it put in without much trouble.

I am near the last of the sheet so must close with a goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Mother,

Your letter was welcome and I was glad to learn that you were well. I am not on duty today so thought I would answer my letters.

At the time you were writing your letter I was on picket, walking to keep awake.

I received a letter from Uncle Frederick and Aunt M. dated the 16th. It says they are all well and that uncle had ten or twelve loads of cane to take to the mill.

I had a letter from Mary Ferris by the same mail that brought yours. Says that she has been up making visits--stayed with you over Sunday.

If we stay here all winter I shall want a woolen wrapper or two. Some think we will go to Texas with Gen. Banks. If we go south Texas is the best place.

I shall want a pair of mittens with a forefinger and a pair of buckskin gloves with cuffs at the wrists.

You could not have sent better things than you sent to me in the barrel--the dried apples especially. We can have good sauce and give some to the sick boys in our company. They seem very thankful for it.

Capt. Bissell is getting better--came to camp Friday and Saturday. Says he shall be glad to get back to camp.

The barrel was packed well. Nothing was injured on the road. The vinegar in the pickles which Miss Cables sent leaked out a little. I would like some pickles very much. If you send any be sure that the vinegar does not leak out. I don't know what you could send that would be more useful than what you sent.

When any of the men are sick George Bradley fixes them some toast and makes tea and does all he can for them.

Three men, one from company K, one from C and one from another company I have forgotten are sick.

Capt. Pec. says that he will go home as soon as he can straighten out his business. If he does we will lose Lieut. Wadhams. If he has to leave the company and take command of company K we will lose the best officer in the regiment except Kellogg. Kellogg places more confidence in him than in any other regimental officer.

When we have been out on batallion drill I have heard Maj. Smith ask Lieut. Wadhams what to do next.

If Capt. Bissell should resign (which some say he will) Wadhams will be captain.

Myron is well and on duty in the city. Cables is corporal of the guard today. Leonard is cleaning his gun. He is well

as usual and in good spirits.

We are to be through with city duty after tonight--so the orderly says. Hope it is true.

Yours ever the same,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Brother Phill,

I was glad to hear from you. You do not know how much good it does a fellow to have a letter from home.

I do not know what to write to you as I have nearly exhausted my stock of news.

A private in company C died last night. His name was Daniel Lyman. His disease was brain fever, so the doctor said.

A train of cars was thrown off the track one day last week near Sewell Run. The train went out for wood. The rebels tore up the track so on the return trip the train was thrown bottom upwards.

The conductor and engineer escaped but some forty of fifty niggers and the breakman were made prisoners.

Last Sunday I was on guard at the engine house and saw the engine. Her name is Dover. She was a new one and one of the best on the road. She is the largest I have seen.

There is a battle going on near Centerville. We could hear the cannon this morning.

Large bodies have been pushed to the front from around Washington. Last Saturday one of our wagons went out after boughs to make brooms. The men saw seventeen regiments marching in the direction of Centerville.

Yesterday two New York regiments, the 152nd and 16th, marched and camped just north of the city.

Last night and this forenoon David Osborn, who went to States Prison for ten years, made us a call. He belongs to the 152nd N.Y. in Gen. Casey's command.

Gen. Sickles' brigade left last Friday for Centerville. There is a forward movement of troops all over the country.

You asked about "proffesor" Pond. He is sort of an orderly for General Slough--that is he has to black his boots, brush his coat and run on errands.

My boots are the best that I could have. They sit easy on my feet and wear well.

Tell Charley to work the harder if he won't write.

I must close by saying goodbye and give my respects to Mr. Osborn Carter, Chas. Dudley, Mr. Merriman, Sam Dudley, Eathen Kilbourn, grandpas Bissell and Wright.

From your brother,

Lewis

Dear Sister Alice,

As you have been so kind as to write me such a good letter I must answer it somehow.

The weather since the snow storm has been warm and seems like spring. The nights are cooler so that an overcoat is comfortable.

I do not have to go on guard as much as I did a few weeks ago. I have a little more time to myself.

I have heard that Mr. Ives has been down to see you. How does he get along now? How do the neighbors do now days? Give my best respects to them.

I am very much obliged to you for the Childs paper and the Observer.

Write again and tell me all the news. When you see the Buell girls give them my best respects. How are Grandpa Wright's folks? Tell them for me that I shall write them a letter soon as I have not forgotten them.

I do not know that you can read this letter as I have written it in a hurry.

Yours ever the same,

Lewis Bissell

Father,

Last Tuesday I had a visit from Edward Bissell of the 153rd N. Y. Regt. His family lives in Gloversville, Monroe County. His father was a nephew of Zebulon Bissell, I think. The next time I see him, I shall ask him to give me the geneology of his family. Will you send me the directions for the History of Ancient Windsor for the accommodation of this Edward Bissell?

Letter #13

Litchfield, Friday Eve,
Nov. 7, 1862

Dear Son,

We were all very much gratified in reading your letter of the 25th of Oct. We were very much gratified to think that you and your tentmates enjoyed the things that were sent in the barrel.

We had a very pleasant time in packing it one Friday and the next Friday evening, it seems, you had an equally pleasant time in unpacking it in your tent.

I am very glad that you relish the butter so much. We were afraid it might be soft and lose its New England taste on its way to Alexandria.

I told Martha Cables that she could send a kiss on the cover of each butter and that might improve the flavor but she thought there were better objects to kiss than butter cans. I think she may not have much to kiss unless it be a little object at Mr. Weeks. Please ask Mr. Cables if he thinks the same.

I am glad that those dried apples stewed make such good sauce and that they will add a relish to your meals.

It appears by your letter that you had not received the other barrel containing apples and a box of cake when you wrote. The barrel you received was sent by Adams Express. The freight we paid was \$4.50. The other barrel we paid 38 cents freight to N.Y. Both were consigned to the care of Peck and Davis, Alex. 8 o'clock--

Samuel has just returned from Bantam and brought your letter of the 3rd inst. containing your photograph in full uniform. We thank you for it. Think it a very good one though somewhat dark.

Today has been very stormy, a high wind blowing from the east is driving the snow furiously into cracks and holes in true winter style. The thermometer stood all day at 6 degrees below

freezing. The cows are shivering as though a mid-winter gale was upon them.

We have not made cider yet.

This morning apprehending a storm Philip and I carried two wagon loads of apples into the cellar--about fifty bushels--nearly all sweet. Heaps of sour ones remain in the orchard nearly covered by the drifting snow.

Our crops are all gathered excepting some turnips east of Mrs. Osborn.

Providence has bountifully smiled on the labors of the husbandman so that our barns are well filled and our cellars stored with the produce of the farm and garden. Our potatoes are excellent--no rot as yet. When boiled they crack open and are mealy.

In regard to the mittens, wrappers, gloves and lining that you wrote about, we shall do the best we can. The mittens are yet to be knit. We hardly know how soon that can be done.

Mrs. Kilbourn bought of Jackson a pair of very thick stout gloves and forwarded them in a box that Mr. Vaill and Mr. Osborn sent this week but your letter was received too late for us to obtain the articles and send them in that.

Mr. Potter has lately sent to Wilson and Mrs. S. Pond to Edwin. We shall inquire. There may be others sending and we can send to you with them. If no opportunity occurs we shall send a small cask or bundle to you by express. Forty-nine pounds or less will go for \$1.25. More than that will be charged two and one-half cents per lb.

I have no money to send you tonight but will enclose what stamps I have and in the middle of next week will write and send to you. We do not find fault on account of your expenses, far from that. We wish you to buy the things that will be for your health and comfort and I will very willingly send this money to you. Money has been very scarce with me of late. I have the promise of some but it has not come yet.

We have not much of an idea what things you may have to buy, much less the price of them. Will you be so good as to keep an accurate account of all the articles you buy for one or two weeks, with the date and price and sent it to us as it will give us quite an insight into all the little wants and necessities of a soldier's everyday life.

What is inspection drill? Mr. Potter says it takes place almost every Sunday.

Please write particularly about Mr. Wainwright. You mentioned, some time since, that you had prayers for the first time at dress parade. Since then you have said nothing about him. At what hours on the Sabbath does he preach? How many Sundays has he preached. Does he hold any other service on the Sabbath or on week days?

(Remainder of letter missing)

Letter #14

Headquarters 19th C. V.
Camp near Alexandria
Nov. 13, 1862

Dear Father,

I received your letter last eve. I was very glad to hear from home and learn that you are all well. I am enjoying as good health as ever I did at home.

The snow storm was quite severe here. Snow commenced falling at 2 A.M. Friday morning and continued all day. It fell to the depth of three or four inches and at night froze quite hard. Saturday it thawed all day on the south side of the buildings.

Sunday we pitched Sibley tents. Was very busy all day. It did not seem much like Sunday--the camp was all bustle and confusion.

Each Sibley tent has a stove shaped like a funnel. It is made of sheet iron and takes but little wood to heat. Each tent has from twelve to fifteen men but is made to hold twenty men.

At night we sleep with our feet to the stove, our knapsacks for pillows. We sleep much more comfortably than in the little tents.

Mr. Cables is not in the same tent with us now because they would not allow three noncommissioned officers in one tent. The non-"commish" are Sergt. Hempstead, Corps. Hinsdale and Mason.

The members of the "Happy Family" tent of Camp Dutton are nearly all in this tent. I shall give you the names of my tentmates some other time.

The weather is warm and pleasant.

You wished to know about the death of Frederick Webster. He took cold one rainy Sunday--stayed in his tent too long before he went to the hospital. After he went to the hospital he was not very sick for two or three days--then began to grow worse.

George Mason got permission from the surgeon to take care of him. When Mason found that he (Webster) was dangerously sick and that the surgeon had given up all hopes of his getting well, he telegraphed home to his father. He arrived the day before Webster died. He knew his father and wife after that was deranged most of the time until his death.

He died about 3 P.M. Wednesday and at 5 o'clock a corporal's guard of twelve men from Co. D escorted the body to town to have it embalmed.

All that wished were allowed to take a last look at their comrade in arms. When the coffin was placed in an ambulance the escort marched with muffled drums. It was a sad sight--one never to be forgotten by any of us.

Tuesday Watson Parmelee, son of "Cooper Bill" died. He was from our company--had been in the hospital some three weeks. He had been very restless. It took one to wait on him--he wanted something all the time. Mason thinks he worried himself to death. He died in the night at about 3 o'clock. The nurse went to give him his medicine and found him dead. His funeral took place the same day. At 3 o'clock the whole company went to the grave. We marched with muffled drums and arms reversed.

The chaplain and both lieutenants followed with the rest. Col. Kellogg and his wife went into the tent and looked at the corpse after which the company filed through the tent, looked at the face of the dead and then formed in line. The lid was fastened down--the coffin placed in an ambulance and with the escort of eight men under Corp. Pond, marched with arms reversed

in front of the ambulance. The Orderly Serg. and the company followed. After them came the chaplain and the lieutenants.

When we arrived at the gate we found Col. Kellogg and wife. They fell in with the company to the grave.

The chaplain read the burial service after which three volleys were fired over the grave.

Lieut. W. gave the order, "About face. March."

We had not gone far when we met a negro funeral procession. At first I could not make out what it was. The driver, pall bearers and mourners had white cloths around their hats.

Today another of our boys died. His name was John White. He is from Company I. He had a fever. His wife had been with him for several days.

The health of the Regt. is improving. Our company has but one in the hospital and fourteen unfit for duty. On drill we turn out the largest company.

We are under marching orders. When we will move, if we move at all, I cannot tell. We expect to go into the forts when we leave here.

There is an increase in activity in the city on the part of the government. It would make your eyes stick out to see the amount of government stores in the city. There are millions of dollars worth here. Shiploads are landed here and carloads are sent to the army every day.

There is an article in the Enquirer of last week about the hospital of this regiment, which is an insult to Col. Wessells and Dr. Plumb. There is no truth in it.

In regard to the hospital tent--The sick are on good beds and are kindly cared for. Dr. Plumb excuses from duty all those who are sick. None are required to do duty when sick. Some have done duty when they ought to have been in the hospital.

Day before yesterday when on battalion drill, Col. Kellogg formed the Regt. into a square. Then said he: "Soldiers, I want to say a few words to you. There have been made false reports at home about this regiment. These reports are killing your colonel by inches. It is your duty as soldiers to put him on his pins. Write home about it. Tell your friends the truth and do not romance about that snowstorm. It came on us as it came on four or five hundred thousand other soldiers. It was no worse than it had been before. You in your Sibley tents ought to be thankful for what you have. Thousands of others lay on the damp ground with no tents, or if any, poor shelter tents. They suffered without grumbling. All I ask is that every pen and pencil in this Regt. be set to writing. Send the letters home by the bushel and I'll see that they are printed. There are no more sick in this Regt. than in those around you. You are as healthy a regiment as can be expected considering the duty you have done."

That is the substance of his remarks so you can judge for yourself. Leonard Bradley is comfortably sick in a private house close by. Dr. Gibbs was sent to the city by order of Lieut. W. The next day his brother-in-law took him to Washington.

There has been a change in the Army of the Potomac. There was some dissatisfaction for a day or two but all seem satisfied with Burnside. I do not know what the Army of the Potomac is doing any

more than you do.

About the barrel--the butter lasted until Monday last. It kept its flavor well. The cheese is not all gone yet nor the dried apples. You do not know what nice sauce those dried apples make.

If you have not bought a pair of gloves yet do not get them very thick for when wet they are so stiff that it is hard to handle a musket.

You wish to know what inspection drill is. Well, first we have to put everything in the best order. Then we sling knapsacks, march out to the parade ground, wheel, form line of battle into columns, then march in review and halt.

The drums go to the rear, the colors take their place--staff and field officers in front of the colors.

The colonel then inspects each musket after which knapsacks are unslung and opened. The colonel walks between the lines and looks at the knapsacks. We shut them up again, sling them and march back to quarters.

Chaplin Wainwright is not what we want but I do not wish to say anything against him. I called on him one evening. Had a very pleasant talk. He gave me a paper and invited me to call again.

The barrel which you sent the same time you sent the first has just come into camp as I am writing.

Today I am on patrol and am writing this letter in the office where all sorts of people come to get passes to go outside the picket lines.

In patrolling the city we sometimes have to go into houses to search for liquor and to hunt drunken soldiers.

After half past ten in the evening no one is allowed on the streets.

In regard to my expenses--I do not intend to use my money in a foolish way, if possible. I cannot tell when we will be paid.

I must close as they are calling for me.

Friday, the 14th--

Today I am on guard. The adjutant chose me for his orderly. He chooses the men that have the cleanest gun and clothes. Four are selected. The colonel has the best, the lieutenant colonel next, the major next and adjutant last.

The duties of an orderly are to run errands, etc. He does not have to carry a musket--can go to his tent at night--and can have a pass the next day. So you see it is something of an object to be clean and tidy.

About my money. I have had to use it more than I wished. Writing materials and postage has cost me \$2.00 or more.

We have to furnish our own materials with which to scour our rifles--no small job.

I am very thankful for what you sent me. The barrel which was filled with apples and cakes came yesterday. I opened the box of cakes. Found that the doughnuts were a little mouldy on the outside but not spoiled. The other cakes are just as good as when you made them.

John Bishop's cake was found safe. Some of the apples had rotted.

Give my best love to all the family.

Affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Little Neal,

I was quite pleased to have a letter from you. Am glad to have you write or have a letter written to me.

As you do not see much of soldiers I shall have to tell you about them.

There is a camp near us in which there are soldiers from all parts of the United States. A great many of them have been in battle and some have been taken prisoners and sent to Richmond. Some have been sick in hospitals.

Be a good girl and help mother all you can.

Dear Sister Amelia,

As you have written me a letter I shall try to answer it.

Yesterday I saw some sixty or seventy contrabands pass through the city. Some of them had bundles on their heads, as large as a bushel basket. This they would carry with their hands in their pockets.

Give my best respects to Caroline and Elle.

As I cannot think of more to write to you I must say

Goodbye,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Brother Sam,

As I must keep up my end in writing I shall have to answer yours.

I am getting along the same as ever. Have plenty to do.

Have but few lazy moments. A soldier does not lead a lazy life.

How does Charles Kilbourn get along now? Have heard

Iyre (?) Terrell is a Millerite parson.

As I have got to the bottom must close.

Lewis

Letter #15

Litchfield, Nov. 14, 1862

Dear Son:

As I expected to write you again this week I shall have to improve the present opportunity.

I have but very little news to communicate this time so you may have a dry uninteresting letter.

We are all well at the present time--all are well in the neighborhood. I do not know of any sick in this part of the town.

Capt. Bissell arrived in town last Tuesday afternoon on a furlough of thirty days. I have not seen him yet. I intend to call on him before he goes back to his Regt.

Your Uncle Everett was here yesterday and also today. He came for our large wagon to move David Dogan to a small house near the factory.

The wife of Mr. Julius Stone (Julie Tom) was buried this week. I had not heard of her sickness until her death.

Many droves of cattle have been brought into this and neighboring towns for sale; they bring a fair price this fall. I have bought an excellent five year old cow of Mr. (Blind) Munson for \$25. I also bought a pair of three year old steers for \$54. They are not as large as Bill but will girt about six feet. I bought them very cheap. We are breaking them for working--they

are kind and very good.

In an exchange with Mr. Horatio Benton for one of the sows and pigs I obtained three very good calves. Last Monday I traded old Lop into a drove from Chenango County, N.Y. for a very nice three year old steer--just about the size--gave \$5. to boot.

Our crops are all gathered. We have the cider to make yet. We are very busy digging and scraping under the barn. I have laid the cellar wall since haying. Am in hope to lay the wall for the "addition" we are intending to build, before winter sets in. We are moving a great deal of dirt. The Old Stags, under the guidance of Philip, work nobly--their strength is tremendous, that is comparatively speaking.

We have sold no winter apples as yet. They are so plentiful there is but little call for them except at a very cheap rate. Frederick Bradley has bought about three hundred bushels. He is intending to ship them to Alexandria, Va. "Care of Peck and Davis" so as to save buying a license which the new law makes it necessary for traders to do. He also intends forwarding about 25 barrels of cider. Please get your mouth ready for a drink. Apples and cider from Bantam in Virginia! What a place of export Bantam is getting to be!

Good butter is now selling for 25 cents per lb.--cheese 10 cents. Please write me the price of apples, cider, butter, cheese, potatoes, flour, etc., so that I may know the cost of living in Alexandria at the present war prices.

The last week's snow has nearly disappeared. The drifts by the fences and on the mountains of Cornwall are still visible.

There are some cousins from Chenango Co. N.Y. visiting in Litchfield. Their names are Sidney Smith, son of cousin Agustus, and Ralph, son of Harry Smith, a brother of Elenor whose visit to L. you may remember. This is the first visit these young men have made to L.

Connected with their visit they have engaged in the business of selling the "Wine Plant". What it is I do not know but it is said to be a plant that is cultivated in this country for the purpose of making wine, perhaps similar to sorghum for making sugar. It is something new in these parts. Cousin Leonard can tell you about them as Sidney has been to the west.

We have got the things you wrote for, except the mittens which will be ready soon.

If we find no one that is intending to send a barrel or box to the regt. we will send a small box next week by express.

How do the things in the barrel last? Is the butter and cheese gone? Have you enough dried apples so that you have sauce?

If we should send again what would be the most useful things we could send? Some of the families in the village think of sending to the boys about Thanksgiving time.

Mary has heard from Augusta Moran only by the way of Samuel Merriam. They have been expecting her for a week past but she has not arrived yet and they have not heard from her. Mary is ready and wishing to start for Washington but is waiting for a letter from Sam. Perhaps you may have a visit from her.

I have but two dollars to send you at this time. Will send

the other two soon. When you write please acknowledge the receipt of it so that I may know that it reaches you.

I see by your letter to Julia that you have got the Sibley tents. How do you like them? Who are your tentmates under this new arrangement? Please write the names of them all so that we may know the whole family. I must close by saying goodbye.

Yours Affectionately

All send love to you.

H.B. Bissell

Letter #16

Litchfield, Nov. 21st, 1862

Dear Son,

We received your letter of the 13 and 14th inst. on Wednesday night.

We were much interested in the account you gave of Frederick Webster. His corpse was brought to Plymouth for interment. He was buried in the new burying ground just west of Plymouth Hollow.

It is a very pleasant looking ground: quite rural in appearance lying on a hillside with forest trees on two sides of it.

Mr. Webster united with the Congregational Church in Litchfield many years since. He took letters from this church to the Plymouth Hollow church three or four years since.

The Rev. Mr. Aversell was the pastor, who has lately been dismissed and appointed chaplain of the nine months regiment.

Webster lived in Harwinton but nearest to Plymouth. He was very active as a Christian. He had a bible class of young ladies connected with the Sabbath School and was also a teacher in a Sabbath School in a back district which was sustained mainly by his efforts, aided by three or four others.

He was a true patriot as well as a Christian. He said to me at Camp Dutton that he hoped that his joining the regiment would be for the good of the country.

When he lived at Litchfield his attendance at church was most constant. I saw him almost every Sabbath and now it is hard for me to think of him as dead; that I shall see his face and hear his voice no more.

I remember his cordial greeting and the warm pressure of his hand when I saw him last. His affectionate "Goodbye Mr. Bissell" I shall never forget.

The influence he exerted in society was good. It must be a loss to the Regt. to have such men as Webster taken away. It seems to me at a time like this when our national troubles are so great and such darkness is gathering around us, so that the best men in the country know not what to do, that the prayers of every true Christian are greatly needed. I think sometimes that those who are Christians do not pray enough; that we are neglecting this great duty.

Mr. Webster leaves a wife and three small children. His mother is a very exemplary pious woman. I boarded in the family when I taught school on Chestnut Hill. Three of the sons went to school to me.

You mention the death of Watson Parmelee. I am slightly acquainted with his father who joined the Regt. at Camp Dutton and is now with you at Alexandria. I had no acquaintance with the son.

Was the chaplain with him in his sickness? Was he a pious man?

It was a very bad place where they lived. Their house looks as if they could be hardly comfortable. Yet the mother must feel sad and lonely, her husband absent in the army and the son laid in a soldier's grave. How much the comforts and consolations of religion are needed at such times as this.

By referring to your letters I find that five of the 19th Regt. have died in Virginia--viz, David Lyman of Goshen, F.B. Webster of Harwinton, Watson Parmelee of Milton, Arthur G. Kellogg of Terryville and John White of Woodbury.

I am very glad to learn that the health of the Regt. is improving and that the sick are so well taken care of. The soldiers should be very careful of their health. Great numbers will return, when this war is over, crippled and maimed for life. Many more with broken down constitutions. What a sad thing war is, to say nothing of the demoralizing influences that will taint the character and lives of thousands. Is it not enough to make one shudder to think of the consequences of this war!

I learn by Mr. Kilbourn's folks who have just received a letter from Myron, that you are at this time in Alexandria occupying an old factory. Is this so? What is the cause of your leaving your Sibley tents and taking such a position?

You mention that Mrs. Kellogg is with her husband. Mrs. Wessells is also with the colonel ministering to his wants now that he is sick. Are there any other ladies in the camp with their husbands? How many and who are they?

Mrs. Merriam has just received a letter from Samuel but I have not learned of its contents. We have heard but very little from Agusta since she joined her husband in camp. Mary is anxious to go and be with Samuel in camp. Whether she will go soon I have not learned.

Mr. Frederick Bradley will start for Alexandria in about a week. He has very kindly offered to carry a bundle to you.

Henry L. Kenney will leave for Alexandria the first Monday in December if he can arrange his business so as to leave. He thought he might take some articles to sell, perhaps enough to pay his expenses. He did not tell me what things he should take.

Who is James A. Beach? Who is the principal nurse of the hospital and has chief management of it? How is Leonard? Does he think it nice business to be a soldier and leave his wife and little ones at home?

I saw Charlotte a few days since. They want to send a bundle of wrappers, etc. to him. Give my love to him.

How does cousin Lyman Smith get along? I should think it must be trying to such boys as he and Charles Adams to drill and be on guard so much. Give them my best respects.

I should like very much to visit your camp and see you and speak a word of comfort and good cheer to all.

In England there are three powerful iron clad rams building. They will be ready soon for the Rebel service for which they are intended. The English as I understand do not intend "intervention" or "mediation" in our affairs at present, that is the government does not, yet the Confederacy have a strong arm to lean upon in the English people who are doing as much as they can possibly do and not get into a war with our Federal Government.

Our minister to Russia, Mr. Cameron, on his return to the United States, stopped a few days in England and these are his convictions. The great end and aim of England is to divide this union so they can still be the greatest nation on the globe. They have long dreaded the prosperity of this nation: its rapid increase of population both in the Western States and in the territory west of the Rocky Mountains and the enterprise of its inhabitants.

England greatly dreads the increase in our navy. With so many excellent harbors as we possess and with such facilities for ship building we could soon have a better navy than even England herself.

You recollect the Crimean war a few years since between the Russians and the Turks. All the Russian seaports are at the extreme north of Europe, frozen one-half the year; hence, their navy is feeble and inadequate for such a great nation. Could they have beaten the Turks, could they have gained possession of Constantinople which they so greatly desired, they would have been in possession of one of the best harbours in the world.

Their navy would have been increased and ships bearing the Russian flag would soon have been seen on every sea, which is not the case now. England saw this; she saw that if Constantinople fell into the hands of the Russian Autocrat her prosperity would be advanced. So you see that England must join the Turks to beat back the Russians--not that that nation had given them any just cause for war any more than the United States has at this time. Their expense of men and treasure can be accounted for in no other way. It is the rapid growth and prosperity of this nation that they mostly dread. Now is the time to break up this Union and it is my honest conviction that they will leave no means untried until they do so.

I write you this for your information. Please reflect upon it and send me your opinion. Please get Mr. Mason's and Theodore's opinions too.

How is it with Mr. Wainwright? Has he been around among the men to get acquainted with them? How often has he preached? Does he have prayer meetings or anything of that kind? How is it with Dr. Gibbs? Is he sick yet? Is Edwin Pond Gen. Slough's orderly yet? Mrs. Henry Hotchkiss is preparing to send a box on to her husband.

Saturday Eve. Nov. 22--

We received your letter of the 18th this afternoon. Very glad to hear of your continued good health.

Our Heavenly Father has been very good to you since you have been absent from us. We all think of you very often.

This week has been very rainy. We made cider last Tuesday. Wish you had a barrel of it.

If you take cold, feel bad, have the headache or are unwell, I want you to take a pretty large dose of capsicum. I recommended it to your Aunt Louisa for headache and she finds great relief by using it--thinks it very good indeed.

How would it do for Leonard's rheumatism? I wish he would try it. Give him half a teaspoonful and let me hear the result.

We and Mr. Kilbourn and Cornelia are expecting to send a barrel of things to you, Myron and Leonard--not exactly for

Thanksgiving for that will last for a day only, but hoping that it may last for many days and add much to your comfort. Your mother will write you about it.

Write particularly about your clothes. Do you sleep warm at night? Do you sleep with your cap on or do you need a cloth cap to sleep in?

How does Albert Peck get along? Give my love to him. Has he things comfortable?

I would remind you to pay particular attention to your spelling when you write.

With much love I am

Yours affectionately,

Henry B. Bissell

Note: This letter was placed out of chronological order in this position because of its relationship with the previous letters.

CHAPTER 2

Guarding Alexandria, Virginia (November 18, 1862-January 11, 1863)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While encamped a mile west of Alexandria, the 19th Connecticut had come under the immediate control of General John P. Slough, Military Governor of Alexandria. On November 15, Bissell and his company were ordered to guard government stores in Alexandria and took up new quarters in the city. Bissell remained in the city until January 12th, when the entire regiment was ordered to join General Robert O. Tyler's command near Fort Worth, Virginia.

This period was not a happy one for the Union army. General Burnside, who was moving on Richmond, was badly defeated by Lee's army at Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. The year ended on a tragic note as the Monitor foundered off Cape Hatteras with casualties and with news of a fierce battle taking place at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. A few days later General Bragg retreated but the Confederates could take solace in the fact they had dealt General William Rosecrans a tactical defeat.

On New Year's Day, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation took effect.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. Bissell's values, those of a rural Connecticut farm boy, were put to a test when his company was detailed to busy, urban Alexandria, a city steeped in Southern culture. How does Lewis Bissell react to his first contact with blacks, and do you notice any changes with subsequent meetings? If so, what do you believe caused a change in his attitude? In chapter one you discovered that Lewis' father had rather strong opinions about war. Can you detect Lewis' position from his letters? This chapter shows a test of many of Lewis' values. Have you ever been in a situation which tested your values?

Northern Society. Does there seem to be much of a collision between Northern society as represented by Bissell and his companions and Southern society as represented by Alexandria?

Bissell describes his perception of England and her role in the war. Was this a typical belief in the North? Is it accurate?

The Army. Bissell becomes involved in a new routine with his guarding of the government stores. What was the routine? How did Bissell react to it? With what types of recreation did Lewis become involved?

For long term projects, there are three which provide a fascinating look at the soldier's life in the army. One is to chart the prices mentioned by Bissell throughout the letters. Bissell earned \$13 a month as a private (\$18 as a corporal) and because he had to ask his father for money, he often communicated the prices he paid for many items. Comparisons with Confederate prices are quite revealing.

Another is to chronicle the health of Bissell's company and regiment. Evidence can be assembled and analyzed to determine what diseases were present, what may have caused them, and the effects of locale, sanitation, and nutrition on the men. Many other factors can be included as well, one being quality of medical care. You will discover that for some reason the doctors received much criticism.

Finally, follow closely the comments Lewis makes about Lieutenant Colonel Kellogg. Of all the people Bissell mentions in his letters, Kellogg is the best described. He is a fascinating individual and Bissell's interactions with him make for interesting drama. In a broader context, the information you gather on Kellogg can be a basis for the study of leadership in the army.

ITEMS FOR IDENTIFICATION

Rodman
Howitzer Find out about these for chapter four
Whitworth
breech loader
Shin plaster: Is it what it sounds like?
wrappers: For the human body, but where?
the Elephant: A pachyderm?
Masons: George Washington was one.
John C. Frémont: Trying to find a path to the White House?
Franz Sigel: How bad was he?
Alpheus Starkey Williams: "Old Pap".
Robert Tyler: One of Connecticut's own.

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

Since slavery was the core of the sectional problems, students may wish to explore this issue in more detail. What was life in bondage like for the slave? How well did the slave survive this experience?

There are many good sources available. American Negro Slavery, edited by Allen Weinstein and Frank Otto Gatell, is particularly well done and contains articles by Stamp, Elkins, and Genovese, which all make for lively discussion. John Blassingame's The Slave Community presents a view of slave conditions and discusses survival under the system. For the teacher with time and access to the television series "Roots", a discussion of how well the show depicts the 'peculiar institution' and how the individuals in the series survived slavery, can be very valuable.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe

This book was initially published in serial form, 1851-1852, and was finally issued as a complete novel in March, 1852. It was an unprecedented success, selling more than 300,000 copies by the end of the year, and, when published abroad, sold in the millions. This enormously successful book first brought the problem of slavery in America to the attention of the entire world, influencing public opinion everywhere. Its popularity abroad undoubtedly helped prevent the Confederacy from obtaining full recognition as an independent nation, as its picture of the horrors of slavery had seized the imagination of hundreds of thousands of middle class European readers.

Inside America, the book helped polarize public opinion on the slavery question; in fact, at one of Harriet Beecher Stowe's meetings with Abraham Lincoln, he is reported to have remarked: "So this is the little lady who started the Civil War!"

In the letters studied in this chapter, you learn of Bissell's first contact with blacks. We cannot ascertain whether he had read Uncle Tom's Cabin, but he did read quite widely, and knew Shakespeare fairly well. We can only speculate (with some justification, considering the popularity of the novel) that he had at least heard of it, and it is certainly possible that he had read it. The Beechers and the Stowes came from Bissell's area of Connecticut, and were well known families. The letters themselves also might provide some evidence. Do you think that Bissell's initial reaction to blacks could have been conditioned by a reading of the novel? It is highly unlikely that he had had any contacts with blacks prior to his experiences during the Civil War. Does he inveigh against the horrors of slavery and the maltreatment of blacks? Do his attitudes reflect purely theoretical and religious values concerning slavery? How do his attitudes change in subsequent encounters? What explanations can you offer for this change? Is it possible that he holds ambivalent views towards blacks and slavery?

If you examine your own attitudes and ideals concerning justice and social and economic conditions, you may find that some of your ideas are purely theoretical, and have not been tested by practical experience of the world. Can you analyze why you might hold these untested ideals? Is it possible that you might change some of these values? Examine your attitudes towards, for example, nuclear power, socialism and capitalism, abortion, capital punishment, and any other moral issue that may be relevant.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a novel of social protest. You will immediately recognize that it is a passionately written polemic against slavery, but what kind of solution does Harriet Beecher Stowe offer to the evils of slavery? What is her attitude towards inter-racial marriage? Does she postulate a future in which black and white can live in harmony and full equality?

An unfortunate aspect of the book is perhaps its Romantic sensibility. What scenes are particularly melodramatic, and is there any use of highly improbable coincidence? Is it a sentimental

novel? If so, why might Harriet Beecher Stowe have written it in this fashion? What was her audience?

Many, if not most, of the characters in the novel are stereotypes, unconvincing as real personalities. Some are entirely good; others unredeemably bad. Identify those which appear to lack depth. You will find that some characters demonstrate more subtlety than others, and you should pay particular attention to St. Clare, Legree, and Miss Ophelia, together with their varying backgrounds.

The central figure of the novel is undoubtedly Tom himself. What values does Tom hold? How do Christian teachings influence him? Examine how Christian ideals pervade the novel. You should also realize that this novel is the product of a devoutly Christian writer. In religious and philosophical terms, what is the overall theme of the novel? Consider the religious ideas of Lewis Bissell, as illustrated by the letters. Does he experience any conflicts? How devout a Christian is he?

Of particularly topical interest in this novel is the concept of "Uncle Tomism". Write a paper comparing and contrasting the modern sense of this concept with the character portrayed in this novel, examining why the term "Uncle Tom" has come to have pejorative associations.

Letter #17Headquarters 19th C. V.
Camp near Alexandria, Va.
Nov. 18, 1862

Dear Father,

Yours of the 14th was duly received on the eve of the 17th. Instead of finding me in my old quarters in camp it found me in the Soldiers Rest in the city.

Company A is on detached duty. Last Friday I was on regimental guard. Got the orderly's position for the day.

Saturday got a pass from the adjutant and went to Fort Worth to see cousin Ed. Smith. Fort Worth is two miles west of our camp--the next fort beyond Fort Ellsworth. It is situated on the top of a hill and commands a long distance of the railroad. The guns command the valley and every approach to the city for two miles around.

I found cousin Ed. Smith in comfortable quarters and making himself agreeable to all.

He took me around and showed me the fort. I went down into the bombproof which is an underground room large enough to hold more than a thousand men and provisions for them for a long time. The bombproof is under the middle of the fort--is covered with earth to the depth of four feet.

The walls of the fort are made of gravel and dirt. The dirt wall is five feet high and five to six feet wide at the top. The top is made of bags of sand laid so that there are loop holes for the riflemen.

He showed me the rifled guns. The largest will carry a ball of twenty-four pounds three miles. These guns are of the Rodman pattern. There are four siege guns which they had down at Yorktown. There are also two mortars for throwing shells. The bore is so large that I should think you could put your head in.

There are two small mortars which are so small that two men can carry them from place to place. Then there are two howitzers from which they can shoot stones or anything that comes handy. Also there are two guns of the Whitworth pattern which load at the breech. They are the same as those which the loyal Americans in England presented to the U.S.

I think that it would take all of Stonewall Jackson's army to take this fort.

On the outside is a ditch 12 or 14 feet wide and 8 or 9 feet in depth. On the outside of the ditch is a fence which the "Old Stags" would not jump over or throw down. It is made of small trees. The branches are trimmed and sharpened. The trunk is then laid on the ground with the branches pointing out from the fort. The fence nearly surrounds the fort and is so tight that a cat cannot crawl through it. Beyond this are the rifle pits which are situated so that they command the hillsides and from which the enemy can be mowed down as fast as they come up.

I stayed and took dinner with him and the captain. Started back

for--On arriving found Company A stirring around in a lively manner and soon found out the cause. The company had been ordered to march to the city to take the place of a company from the 11th N.J. which had been instructed to join its regiment which had been ordered to the front.

We slung knapsacks and started for the city and upon arriving went to the Soldiers Rest. We relieved the N.J. boys who marched at three in the night.

Our business is to guard the building in which we are staying, also government stores.

When the cider which Mr. Fred Bradley is bringing down, arrives it will find that my mouth has been in readiness for six or eight weeks.

There is a sloop from Norwalk, Ct., unloading cider and apples near by. I have not seen any apples here that I like so well as Ct. apples. Apples are two and three dollars per barrel, potatoes a dollar a bushel, cider eight dollars per barrel, beef twelve and eighteen cents per pound, butter thirty, thirty-five and forty cents per pound, cheese twenty cents, flour the same as in other places. Oysters in the shell fifty cents per bushel.

Col. Wessells is very sick. His wife is with him. He says he will not leave the regiment to go home unless he goes in a coffin.

The health of Co. A. is improving. We turn out the largest number of men of any company in the regiment.

About sending things--I think butter, dried apples, cheese, pickles and preserves are the most valuable. If you send by express send a barrel or keg. Be sure it is well hooped, the heads firmly fastened and the contents packed solid.

The things in the first barrel are nearly gone. The butter lasted until last week--the cheese has just gone. Some dried apples remain. Had some this morning.

The barrel which was sent by freight has all been eaten. The cakes were not hurt much. We ate them all. Finished the last yesterday.

I saw Samuel Merriman Saturday last. Did not see him but a short time. As for Agusta have not seen anything of her since she made the visit. Sam looks well and is, I think, in better health then before he enlisted.

Tell Mary, if she comes, to be sure and call on Co. A. Shall be glad to see her down here.

Leonard has been laid up with a lame back for four or five days. Is getting better. Will soon be around again.

I must close as the drum has beaten for drill. Give my love to all at home. Tell mother and Phill to write.

Goodbye. Yours ever the same,

Lewis

Letter #18

Litchfield, Nov. 25, 1862

Dear Son:

We are all well at this time. Mr. Kilbourn's are well. I do not know of any sick in Bantam.

I forwarded to you two dollars in a letter a few days since and a Govt. shin plaster for 50 cents. Have you received them? I will

enclose more to you soon.

I am writing very hurriedly this morn so as to be ready for the stage.

Last Eve. we packed a barrel for you, Myron, Leonard and Mr. Cables. I hope that it may arrive speedily and safe. It is not exactly for Thanksgiving but is all we can send.

You can each recount the many blessings that you have received and be thankful to our Heavenly Father as well in Va. as in Ct. I trust you will do it.

We all have an invitation to Grandpa Bissell's. Charles has killed the turkey and they are making preparations.

The Thanksgiving in New England will be saddened this year by the recollection of war and the absence of loved ones in the army.

We had a very pleasant time at Mr. Eliada K's filling the barrel. I and your mother were there--Mrs. C.A. Dudley and Etta--Mr. Geo. Merriman and Harriet and a boy from S.H. Dudley's with dried apples. Mrs. Cables and Martha were up in the afternoon and brought things for Mr. C. Phil went on Saturday P.M. to Cornelia's for Leonard's things.

I read a part of your letter to Mr. P.S. Beebee who was interested. Wanted I should call when ready to send to you again. Phil went there. They gave butter and good wishes for you and Leonard.

Now about packing--Mr. E.K. a whole cheese, weight 25 lbs., a box of butter 11 lbs. dried apples, etc.--Mrs. Dudley part of a cheese, dried pears (directed to Leonard) and apples--Cornelia, two balls of butter and some from Mr. Beebee and Aunt Julia, in box, directed to Leonard, 10 lbs. Vest, wrapper drawers, stockings, suspenders, etc. Mrs. Cables' butter with a cloth around it, not weighed but about 6 lbs., pail of honey, bundle of dried fruit, part of a cheese etc. Some clothing will be sent to Mr. C. by Fred'k Bradley--box of butter for you filled with ours and Mr. Beebee's 10 lbs. part of old cheese from grandpa and part from us, apples, gloves, mittens, wrappers, paper, envelopes, etc. There are a few other things in the barrel but all were labeled, I think, so you can get them right.

You have not written about a vest; if you wish for one you can write and we can send the one you wore in Camp Dutton or we can make a thicker one.

We do not know how it may be with you. I understand the Co. are all together in Alexandria.

How do you eat your rations? Does Mr. Cables eat with you? How many and who of you eat together?

One bag of dried apples was marked "Mr. Cables". If he is not with you be sure and give him the bag. I sent them, and more if he wishes. Am very sorry he was left out when you went into Sibley tents.

It rained last week all but two days.

Capt. Edward Vaill and wife were in town--called around but very little.

Aunt Thankful Smith and Frances are invited by Aunt Julia to Thanksgiving. Chas. Peck is expected to bring them up from Waterbury tomorrow.

Cousin Frederick Smith is married to a Miss Clark of Mt. Carmel, Ill.

In much haste

Yours affectionately,
H.B. Bissell

P.S. What was the amount you paid for freight on the barrel of apples? We paid 38 cents to New York.

Have you any of those marks that Aunt Julia wrote for you with indelible ink. If you have you can sew them on your mittens, etc. If you have not we can send you some.

H.B.B.

If Leonard Bradley is still sick, can you give him a bit of cheese and butter and apples. I saw his father yesterday. He has not sent anything. Give my love to him.

H.B.B.

Letter #19

Nov. 27, 1862
Headquarters A Co. 19th Rgt. C.V.
Alexandria, Va.

Dear Father,

I received your letter this morning which is Thanksgiving Day in Va. as well as in old Ct. (appointed by Gov. Pierpont). Most of the stores are closed and business suspended except that Uncle Sam keeps on with his business just the same.

Negroes are loading small canal boats night and day. These are towed down the river by little puffing steam tugs, to Aquia Creek.

We have not heard any news from Burnside's Army. There are various reports and rumors around but they do not amount to anything. Hope we will soon hear of another Union victory.

Co. A is keeping Thanksgiving Day the same as they would any day. The duties are just the same no matter what the day is. For dinner today we had beans, salt beef and bread. Do not know what we will have for supper. Very likely it will be rice, molasses and coffee. Well we will not grumble about that for we compare our situation with that of thousands of other soldiers who have nothing but hard crackers, salt pork and beef and have to sleep with no covering but a blanket and nothing to protect them from the storms of rain but a leaky shelter tent.

I have had a good many talks with soldiers who have stopped at Soldier's Rest (the name of our headquarters) for their meals, which are furnished by the government at all times of day or night. One man told me that he had not slept in a tent for six months and had not slept on a bed in ten months. Another told me that for one month he had nothing to eat but raw pickled pork, wormy bread and coffee and slept on the ground. This man belonged to an Ohio regiment of cavalry--was with Fremont in western Virginia. Another said that when he was taken prisoner by the rebels they took his pantaloons from him and sent him to Richmond in nothing but shirt and drawers. Was there eight weeks, sent down the river, exchanged, sent to Washington and marched through Washington in his shirt and drawers, came to Alexandria where the government gave him a new uniform.

I have seen the poor fellows march through Alexandria in much the same manner. But you must not think it is so with all of them.

If the editors of newspapers knew how much mischief they do

they would keep still. The rebels like nothing better than to get a northern paper. It gives them all the information they want.

I must stop for it is my turn to go on duty.

Thanksgiving Night--

Have just supped on cold beans, bread and coffee.

My post of duty today was to guard a large pile of government wood which is for a bakery which is being built. There is one in the city which employs one hundred and fifty hands night and day. They bake thirty thousand rations every twenty-four hours. At home this would keep you in bread for years. The new bakery will bake thirty-five thousand loaves or rations.

Friday morning, the 28th--

As I could not finish my letter shall try to finish it today. I received your letter of the 25th late last evening. If I did not have a good Thanksgiving supper it has all been made up in the letters which you have written.

The postage stamps which you sent in your first are welcome, also those in the last which I shall have to take to the P.O. and exchange them for three cent ones. Postage stamps other than one and three cent ones would be of no use to me if I was in the field.

You wished to know about Watson Parmelee. He was about 17 years of age. Was a very uneasy boy. I am told that at home he had his own way with everything. When he was sick he wanted more than ever. He used bad language to the doctor and to the nurse and to his father whenever he came to see him.

I do not know whether or not the chaplain went to see him. Capt. Bissell used to tell him that he must leave off using bad language. There is plenty of swearing in camp.

The reason why we have left our Sibley tents and taken up quarters in the city was to relieve a company of the 11th N.J. which has been ordered to the front. Co. A being the largest in the regiment and had the fewest men that would get drunk was chosen.

We are in a brick building which used to be used for a cooper's shop. There are three stoves in the room on which we can heat water and cook. Some of the rooms are lighted with gas. We do not mess together. Each man goes to the cook, gets what he wants and eats it. When we go back to camp we will have mess.

Leonard is improving in health slowly. Says that soldiering is not very nice work but he did not leave home for a change or money. Lyman Smith's health is not very good but he does duty most of the time.

As for Mr. Wainwright, I have not seen him since we left camp. Did not see him much in camp except in his tent or on his horse. I do not know of attending prayer meetings or having any.

Ed. Pond is still at Gen. Slough's. Says he is not very well. Guess he is out late at night, etc.

I will write about politics in my next. Tell Phill and the rest to write. "Nothing does a soldier watch for with more anxious looks than a letter from home."

Yours in a hurry,

Lewis

Tell Cornelia I am very much obliged to her for the tract. A gentleman gave me one the other day entitled "Take care of your health" which I shall fasten in my book.

Nov. 28, 1862

Dear Mother,

I was glad as usual to hear from home. I received yours of the 21st and 22nd on Thanksgiving Day, early in the morning and father's of the 25th in the evening. I think that I have had my share of letters for one day. I am thankful for them.

I am well as usual. Do not know that I have felt unwell since I came here.

The next time that I visit camp I will make the acquaintance of Mr. Taylor's brother. I saw Mr. Minor yesterday--met him on the walk. He says that he is comfortably well for him and that he will write to you. If he does, answer his letter if you do not mind. He wished me to remember him to all the friends at home. He does not stand camp life so well as some.

Some men who when they left home were healthy and tough as could be now cannot do anything, are in the hospital or else limping around camp on a stick. Jay Watrous has been unfit for duty for more than a fortnight. Says he is gaining slowly. Mr. Lyons has been sick some but is with the company. Frederick Jennings was the first man from our company that went to the hospital sick. Is better now so that he does guard duty. I think he will soon be able to drill. Does not get much, if any, whiskey to drink.

Leonard Bradley is staying at a private house. He has been quite sick--is better now so that he can walk about the house and write letters. Goodwin Osborn is better--told one of the boys that he would come and see the company in a day or two.

Last night as I was walking through the street near our quarters I came to a negro house and found half a dozen or more wenchies and as many men in a great pickle. I asked one of the women what was the matter and she said that a man had been stabbed close by where I stood. I asked where he was and was told in the house and almost dead. I went on my way and did not think anymore about it until this morning when I found out it was so. The man was a negro and did not live fifteen minutes after he was stabbed. The man that killed him was drunk. You do not catch the boys of our company out at night without their bayonets as such things happen very frequently in the city.

About the gloves, you must do as you think best. I think that if we should leave here I should want thick mittens for we might have to handle the pick and shovel.

I do not know as I shall want a vest if I have wrappers to wear. My clothes have worn some but I have kept them sewed up and mended every hole that I could find. My stockings have worn well--no holes in them yet.

Shall have to get my boots soled soon which down here costs one-third more than at home. I forgot to tell you to send some leather and I could have had them mended here with it.

Tell Mr. Beebee that neither pen nor words can thank him sufficiently for the butter which you say he so kindly sent us.

Lyman Smith has just got a barrel which has been on the road six weeks--apples, cheese, etc.

Last Sunday I went to church for the first time since I left home. It was the same church that Washington used to attend. It is built

of brick--will seat from three to five hundred. The inside is neatly finished. The pew which Washington used to sit in is just the same as when he was alive. There is a very good organ which sounds like the one in the church at home. There were three clergymen present. Had a good sermon--the first that I have heard since I left home.

We will look for the barrel in less than a week. Please write how you sent it. To whom was it directed and when it started?

I should have liked to have been with you and helped eat the turkey but duty calls me down here.

Give my love to Grandpa and Mother Wright and all the cousins reserving a large portion for yourself. I remain, as ever

Your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. I shall send two photographs that I have forgotten to send before.

Letter #21

Nov. 30, 1862

Headquarters Co. A. 19th Regt.
Alexandria, Va.

Dear Father,

As it is Sunday morning and I have a little leisure time I will improve it by answering your last letter which came to hand Thanksgiving Day.

The weather is pleasant out of doors. The ground has not frozen much yet.

Large shipments of provisions and munitions of war are sent down to Aquia Creek every day by canal boats and steamers which are constantly going and coming.

The president has been to see Gen. Burnside. How he likes the looks of things he has not said. But one thing is certain, there is more confidence felt in the army now than there was a month ago.

People here seem to think that Richmond will be taken this time--for what old "Burny" undertakes to do, if let alone, he is pretty sure to accomplish. What he is doing down at Fredericksburg I cannot very well make out. It has been reported that he has made a reconnaissance within twenty miles of Richmond. News mongers do not know what to say. Everything seems to appear rather misty to them.

Old soldiers tell me that something important is going on now. A great blow, they think, will soon be struck in the direction of Richmond.

Yesterday three guerrillas were brought in from Mannassas. They say that Gen. Stonewall Jackson does not know what to do and that Gen. Lee is in a terrible fix--does not know what to make out of Burnside's movement.

I must stop and go to church.

Have just returned from church. There are but three churches open for public worship in the city, one Catholic, one Presbyterian and one Episcopal. I went to the Episcopal, Christ Church, which was not very largely attended. The Catholic Church is the largest in the city. It is a new building and has, I am told, the largest congregation.

Last Sunday and Sunday before we had prayer meetings in our quarters. All of the company not on duty were present. We also have prayers evenings when it is so that we can.

Mr. Wainwright has not been to see us yet. We have been here two weeks last Saturday. The doctors come here almost every day to see the sick. A good many are complaining of colds and jaundice. Will Watrous is sick with the earache. His ear has broken and runs. Will says to tell you that he is here yet but feels about used up. Goodwin Osborn walked down here from the hospital for the first time since he has been sick. He says he will soon be with the company again.

In your letter of the 21st you wished to know what I thought about the intervention of England in the present war. It is, no doubt, the intention of the British government to do all it can to help the south and at the same time keep on the right side of the U.S. government. She wants the Union destroyed but wants cotton from the south and corn from the north. It would not do for her to acknowledge the southern Confederacy for in such a case she would be declaring war on the U.S. Also the English oppose slavery which they would have to uphold if they acknowledged the southern Confederacy.

It is true that it is the aim of the British and the French to do all they can to destroy this government and have the selfish pleasure of being the strongest nations on the earth. The Federal Government has borne the insults of Great Britain longer than Great Britain herself would have borne the same from our government or any other government.

It is my opinion that the English will keep on helping the south continue the war until both parties are exhausted then step in and finish it up to suit herself. There is no use in giving up to the south, now that we have gone so far and sacrificed so much. The rebels cannot hold out a great while longer unless they get help from abroad.

There have been several barrels come to members of our company. Last week George W. Mason had one, Chas. Hinsdale one, Theodore and Goodwin Osborn one which had been on the road twenty days. All of the contents were good. Nothing had been injured. Myron's things came in it. A box came to Charles Belcher and one to Leonard Bradley--another to Appollos Buell. A box of hospital supplies also came for the company--made up mostly of dried apples of which there was over half a barrel, dried plumbs and currants, a can of jelly and two bottles of wine, dried peaches, etc. etc. All are very useful. None will be thrown away.

Theodore had a letter from Joseph. They are down with Burnside. All of the boys are well (he writes)--no news.

How does your fall work get along? Please write particulars as I am as much interested in it as though I was at home. What are you going to do with Phill this winter? Have you got the barn cellar done yet? If you have not I should think that it would be rather cold work at this time of year.

You spoke about a blanket in one of your letters. A stout thick blanket would be very comfortable but if we should leave it would be rather too much of a burden to carry.

you can send me the vest that I wore in camp at home or make a new one.

Give my love to all,

From
Lewis

Letter #22

Dec. 5th, 1862

Dear Father,

Perhaps you will wonder at my delay in writing to you. My reason is that I have been waiting for a letter from home. As none came last night I made up my mind to write.

The barrel came Tuesday evening. We unpacked it and found everything safe and nothing injured. The honey leaked out a little and got on one of my wrappers.

I like the wrappers very much. They are so thick and warm. I have not seen any so good in the city. The gloves are just what I wanted. The fit cannot be improved. Tell Aunt Griswold that I am under great obligations to her for the nice warm mittens which she knit for me. Will you thank her for me?

The lining I shall have put in my coat the first chance I get. Give my best respects to Mr. P.S. Beebe and thank him for me and the rest of the boys.

Did you put in a bolt of butter with Mr. Cables butter? Thank Aunt Julia for the cheese. It is is the best old cheese I have tasted since I left home. I have butter and cheese enough to last for some time. Some of the boys thought it foolish to send dried apples--but they will want a little sauce when I make some. I cannot thank you sufficiently for your kindness and thoughtfulness in packing and sending the barrel.

Mr. Potter and Fred Bradley arrived here Tuesday afternoon direct from home. How much good it does one to see friends from home. Mr. Potter says it is rather dull in Litchfield this fall. Well, you must make the best of it. That is the way we do down here.

I am writing on a sheet of the paper you sent last. It is very good. Thin paper is the best when you can get it good. It is so much lighter and takes up less room.

Mr. Potter thinks that he has been more than paid for coming down here. He has not seen many of the wonders yet. Will have to look around some more before he has seen all of the Elephant.

Nothing would please me better than to see you down here. But I shall not expect to see you until I come home, which will not be this winter.

Fred Bradley says he has got a cargo of apples and cider on the way here. I intend to have at least one good drink of cider and an apple or two to eat. Cider is selling at 25 cts. per gallon, good eating apples 32 cts. per peck, flour \$13. per barrel, butter 30 cts. per pound, cheese 16 cts., potatoes 75 cts. per bushel.

Within a week thirty thousand troops have left Washington and vicinity. All go to join Burnside.

Lieut. Wadhams had a letter from Seth Plumb which says that the Litchfield boys are all well and we may expect to hear of a great battle in a few days.

The new monitor Passaic was towed up to the Navy Yard Wednesday to have her boiler fixed. The boat on which the turret sits is over 150 feet in length and is but two feet out of water. The turret is the only thing that can be seen at a distance. I could not make out how large it was, being covered up with canvass.

Steamers loaded with troops are passing down the river every day. Gen. Casey's brigade of twenty-three thousand crossed the Long Bridge Sunday night--will march down the Maryland side, cross over and join Burnside.

It looks more like our staying here all winter now than before as troops are leaving every day.

Mr. Wainwright called at our quarters yesterday for the first time since we left camp which will be three weeks tomorrow. Smart chaplain he is!

I wish you had sent a pair of soles for my boots. Will cost me \$1.00 to get a pair of soles put on. We wear out the bottom of the boots fast on the pavements.

Give my love to all the family. Tell all that can to write.
Lewis Bissell

Letter #23

Headquarters Co. A 19th Regt. C.V.
Alexandria, Va.
Dec. 6th, 1862

Dear Father,

I received yours and Philip's letter yesterday, the 5th. I had just finished a letter to you giving an account of the arrival of the barrel and thought I could answer your last at the same time.

Yesterday it rained then snow fell to the depth of two inches--froze quite hard last night and has not thawed out much today.

Mr. Wainwright did not hold forth Thanksgiving Day (that I am aware of). You wish to know about Mr. Wainwright and what I think of him as a chaplain. I think he is not much better than no chaplain at all. He has not held a prayer meeting or attended one (unless he has since I left camp) that I know of. Goes around camp but little. The men do not respect him as a Christian man as much as they do Col. Kellogg although he swears so much.

Thursday Col. Kellogg came over to see how we got along. He sat down and talked with the sick men--spoke words of comfort, cheered them all he could and made himself agreeable to all. Looked at the muskets and went away much pleased.

Mr. Wainwright came the next day, talked some, inquired after the health of the company, etc., mounted his horse and went away. That is the first and only time we have seen him. If we had a chaplain that would take some interest in the Regt. he might exert a great influence over the minds of the men.

Mr. Richards is the man for chaplain of this regiment. He is worth twenty men like Mr. Wainwright. We have prayer meetings every Sunday evening since we left camp. All that are not on duty can go to the church in the daytime and evenings.

I do not know whether Mr. Wainwright visits the sick in the hospital or not. He did not very often when I was in camp. Do not know whether he has of late or not.

I received the money you sent me for which I am very thankful for I have used more money of late. Had a slight touch of jaundice and had to get some of Dr. E. Cooper's Jaundice Bitters which have cured me. They cost 37 cts. per bottle, which are small.

Today had my boots mended--soled and heeled, which cost the small sum of one dollar and 25 cts. taking all the money I had. Sole leather is 40 cts. per pound. A pair of boots costs from \$5 to \$9.

I think I shall have to borrow a dollar from Mr. Potter and give him an order on you. I do not like the plan but do not see any other way to get along. We will not be paid off until the first of January.

You wished to know about the contrabands. There are some 350 of them that work for the government. I have not had an opportunity of talking with them. The boss does not want us to while they are at work. Some will do a good day's work, others will do as little as they can.

When I have been on duty close to where they are working I have seen some of them crawl on top of a pile of barrels, take out a spelling book and study hard. When it came time to leave off work they shut the book, got down and worked for a few minutes. When the boss calls the roll just the same as they do in the army, each man answers to his name. When off they start for their quarters which is an engine house.

I have never been stationed there but Leonard has and says they are as jolly a set of human beings as he ever met. Some of them can read notes in a singing book just as fast as anyone and sing very well. Some of them are men of good common sense, others are the opposite. They are called the Happy Family.

They get \$25 a month. Most of them are ragged. It does not make much difference what kind of clothes they wear for they have to work in the mud and rain, day or night whenever a train of cars or a boat has to be unloaded.

Tell Frank and the girls that I thank them very much for the chestnuts.

Yesterday George Bradley exchanged some rice for corn meal and made a pudding for supper. We thought it something nice.

Give my love to Grandpa and Grandma Wright; also to Aunt L. and Uncle E.

I remain ever yours,
Lewis

Dear Sister Alice,

Your letter came safely to hand with the rest although they were sometime on the road. The usual time for a letter is two days.

I am well at present--so is Myron and Leonard.

We have had very pleasant weather at present for the past week. What little snow fell last week has all gone. The ground has frozen but little as yet. I guess I shall not dig my way through snowdrifts this winter. More likely I shall have to pick my way through mud.

The house that you see is the one in which Col. Ellsworth was shot by the rebel Jackson. I have passed it often. Col. Ellsworth was the first officer killed after the war broke out.

In this house Gen. Washington received his commission as Commander in Chief of the Revolutionary Army. It is an old house--nothing handsome about it. The same flagstaff is there from which Col. Ellsworth tore the rebel flag. The Stars and Stripes float from it now and I hope they always will.

Give my best respects to Ida and Hattie.

From your brother,
Lewis

Dear Brother Frank,

I am very glad you wrote me such a nice letter and I must write you as good a one in return.

Friday--week before last--was the coldest day we have had down here. We do not have as cold weather or as much snow as you have at home. It rains more than it snows.

There are plenty of dogs in the city. They bark and make so much noise that they keep me awake.

I have seen but one pair of oxen at work since I came here. Mules and horses are much used. I have seen mules as large as the black mare--some larger.

I have not met with any accidents yet.

There are 80 or 90 contrabands here. They work for the government. Some are black as ink, others yellow. They do not dress very good but some have good clothes, the rest are as ragged as bears.

I have not fired my rifle at a target yet but have shot it off. It kicked but little.

Lieut. Col. Kellogg swears some but not so much as he used to. Lieut. Wadhams is well and takes the best care of the men that he can.

I have not learned to sing the songs as I have had a cold most of the time.

Be a good boy, use your arithmetic well, study hard and do not plague mother but help her all you can.

From your brother,
Lewis

Dear Sister Amelia,

I am very much pleased with the letter that you had Pa write.

I am well and have grown fleshy since I left home. I hope that you will finish the stockings you have begun.

You want to know about the contrabands. Some of them are black as ink, others are not so black. They do not have their children with them. They are raggedly clothed. If they had good clothes they would soon be all dirt for they have to work in the mud and rain, day or night.

Some of them can sing, read and write.

Dear Sister Cornelia,

As I have been writing to the rest of the family and as you have had a nice letter written I must try to answer it.

I should like some of the pound apples very much. I do not have any but those I buy.

My Thanksgiving supper was not made up of turkey, chicken pie, cake and the like.

We do not have much snow down here in the winter. It is mostly rain.

I am very much obliged to you for the chestnuts. They are not all gone yet. Everything in the barrel was found all right and has done us a great deal of good.

From your brother,
Lewis

Note--These letters were written on stationery having a colored illustration of the Marshall House, Alexandria, Va., by C. Magnus, N.Y.

Letter #24

Dec. 6, 1862

Dear Brother,

Your letter came to hand and was read with pleasure although it was short. That may be the case with this.

The weather today is chilly. The boys are busy making bunks to sleep in. One bunk holds two men. Build one bunk above the other same as they do on steamboats.

The contrabands are of all shades from light yellow down to blackest of black. Some of them can read and write very well. Some are good singers and understand the rules of music. Most of them are honest and industrious. Others will not work unless compelled to.

I do not know of their stealing much. One was caught last night stealing wood. That is the only instance that has come to my notice.

If Mr. E. Kilbourn wants any more ditches dug tell him to send for some contrabands. They will work for \$25. a month which is cheap for this kind of help. All they will want to encourage them is talk of freedom and then the dirt will fly high and fast.

One good Yankee can do in one week what they will do in two and do it better. Most of them think it a disgrace to be called "Contraband."

They have lectures and meetings I am told. I have not been to any of them yet but shall at the first opportunity.

Tell Charlie that he will have to dry up until his cold has melted. We have plenty of the same sort down here. Most of them are getting over it.

Ed. Pond has been discharged from the responsible duties as orderly to Gen. Slough and ordered back to the company as unfit for duty. He is grunting around--says he is sick but if the truth was told it would be--homesick.

He told one of our men, who is clerk for the General, his name is Gideon Pond, that he meant to come home with shoulder straps and sport a sash and a sword. I think he will find himself very much mistaken.

How do you like Mr. Taylor for school teacher? How is the north school getting along. Do Charley Kilbourn and Frank Gilbert get along?

Give my best respects to them all. Tell them to write and I will answer.

Fred Bradley said that Fred Moss had signed over and that Issac Morse was about to close his store.

Give my regards to all Grandpa Bissell's people. Write soon and tell all the news.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis

Letter #25

Dec. 14, 1862
Alexandria, Va.
Headquarters Co. A 19th C.V.

Dear Father,

As I have been waiting for a letter from home have not written you. I have been expecting a letter every day.

Today I am on duty at the negro quarters. Do not have anything to do but sit by the stove, keep fire, read the paper, sleep and talk with the contrabands, etc.

Since last Monday things have gone on much the same with us, with one exception--that is, the paymaster made his appearance Thursday. Paid the regiment from time of enlisting up to the first of November. My wages amounted to \$21.66.

Ten dollars, which you can use for me, I shall send home in this letter. I am not afraid to place it in your hands. The remainder I shall keep.

I bought a pair of pants from a discharged soldier for \$2.00. The pair I drew in camp are getting pretty well worn. If I had drawn a pair the government would have charged \$3.30. The remainder of my clothes are in good condition; that is, as good as can be expected of a soldier.

The paymaster took us by surprise. Capt. Bissell, Mr. Potter and Lieut. Shumway had started for Fort Worth to see cousin Ed.

Got as far as camp when the adjutant told the captain to face about and get his company ready to be paid off.

Mr. Potter started for home Monday this week. Will be a week or more on the road, as he will visit on the way home. When he gets home call and see him.

Very likely you have seen Fred Bradley.

The Hon. Geo. C. Woodruff made us a short visit Tuesday of last week. He seemed very much pleased with our present quarters and hoped we would stay in them all winter.

Mr. Wainwright has not been to see us since I last wrote which was a week ago last Friday or Saturday. Have you received it? Your last I received a week ago Saturday.

Capt. Bissell is improving very fast. Is able to command the company part of the time. Lieut. Wadhams has been unwell the past week but was out this morning to inspect the company. Gave some of the boys a scolding for disobeying his orders. Some of them were off uptown at roll call. Told them it would not work and if they disobeyed again they must look out for the consequences.

Last Sunday it was cold, in fact the coldest they ever have in the winter. The snow has not all gone--some is left on the north side of the buildings. Since then the weather has moderated and is warm and pleasant today.

Very likely you have heard all the news about Burnside's army. Two companies of the 1st. Ct. Art. with 120 volunteers from the other companies have gone to help take Fredericksburg. Companies B & M went. Took their heaviest guns and at last accounts were playing upon the city.

When Burnside called for volunteers to go across the river and drive off the rebel sharpshooters every man of the 8th C.V. stepped

forward. He told them that only eighty could go as there were but eight boats, ten men to a boat. How many of the Litchfield boys went I have not learned.

At last accounts there was a battle going on there. Burnside telegraphed to Washington that all was going well. That was as late as 12 A.M. Saturday.

Steamers loaded with troops have been passing down the river every day of the past week.

Mr. Cables saw two men who had been down at Mount Vernon who told him that they could hear the firing at Fredericksburg very plainly. Mount Vernon is twelve miles below here. Mr. Potter has been there and can tell you about it.

Leonard is slowly recovering from the Rheumatism. Is able to do duty at the negro quarters. Jay Watrous has been troubled with earache and rheumatism. Is better so that he is able to do guard duty most of the time. Is with me today. Jay sends his best respects. Says that he will soon be kicking around as usual. Leonard Bradley does not gain very much. All of the Bantam boys but Ed. Pond are well and in a flourishing condition.

Wednesday I went to Fort Worth. Saw cousin Ed. Smith. Found him well as usual and aching for a chance to go to the front.

He showed me a new gun which will throw a hundred pound ball over five miles. The gun weighs 2789 pounds; the diameter of the bore is 7 3/16 inches; the length is about ten feet; the diameter at the breech is two feet or more. It took eight horses and one hundred men to draw it up the hill and into the fort.

Dr. Gibbs is still in Washington. Bill Hull saw him Friday. Says he will come back to the company before long.

Capt. Bissell says that he meant to see you before he came back but the order from the War Department started him off sooner than he wanted to.

I received a letter from Uncle Everett telling me that all the people in their neighborhood were well. How are Grandpa Bissell's people? Have not heard from them in a long time. Give them my best respects and tell them I am well, or at least I feel so.

Myron is tough as a knot; so is Charley Adams. They have not seen a sick day since they left home.

Col. Wessells was carried on a litter, by the boys from our company, from the hospital to a house close by camp, last Thursday.

The butter holds out well. Leonard and I have just commenced on one of the boxes. Have finished the ball.

Give my best love to all at home. Tell all that can to write for nothing does a soldier look for with more interest than letters from home.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #26

Alexandria, Va.
Dec. 17, 1862

Dear Father,

I received your letter of the (?) Monday the 15th. The morning

of the same day sent a letter home with a \$10.00 government note.

I am well as usual. Leonard is improving. John Bishop has the mumps. I shall come in for my share of them. Well I am certain of one thing--that is, I shall have a good place to stay in if I do have them. There are some twenty cases of measles in camp. One man has died, so Sergt. Williams said last night. I do not know his name nor the company to which he belonged.

Two others are quite sick. There are six from our company in the hospitals in the city; namely, Charles Merr , Good Osbourn, Chas. Barber, Corp. Chas. Hinsdale, T.F. Vaill, Robert Coe and a man by the name of Hannah from Morris.

Theodore and Hinsdale went yesterday the 16th. Theodore, so the doctor said, has a fever. Hinsdale commenced with the jaundice. Neither of them are dangerously sick.

The weather for the past week has been very pleasant. Yesterday morning it began raining but stopped before noon. Today is cooler but not uncomfortable.

This morning news came that only part of Gen. Burnside's army had fallen back across the river. Gen. Siegel's army of 50,000 men are within a few miles of the main body of the Army of the Potomac.

The reason why Burnside fell back was because of the rebel General Hill whose army has not been heard from. Some think that he will turn up in the rear of the army and draw the attention of Burnside while the main army retreats toward Richmond. But old Burney is not to be fooled in that way.

Before Saturday night of this week he will be re-enforced to the tune of seventy-five or one hundred thousand men, all from Siegel's Army Corps. Gen. Williams' 12th Army Corps, over forty thousand, are on the march from Harpers Ferry.

We are staying at the soldier's rest yet and if nothing turns up we will stay all winter. But we may march at any moment.

The barrel arrived at the express office all right. We did not have to pay anything on it. You write about vinegar. I think we can do without it as long as we have butter and apple sauce to eat. We draw flour and exchange it for cornmeal. Have hasty pudding for supper every few days.

I must close for the present as it is time for drill.

Have just supped on pudding, molasses and coffee.

This afternoon the steamer on which Gen. Burnside sailed up and demanded the surrender of Fort Macon (so Lieut. Wadhams said) went down the river.

Last night I saw one of the 5th C.V. who knows the place Dutton fell. He said Dutton and another lieutenant were buried in one grave. Their bodies were placed in boxes. This man belonged to Company I--enlisted in Woodbury.

One of our men found his brother in the 20th C.V. His name is Hubbard.

Monday we went over to camp for battalion drill--the first time since we left camp.

Mr. Minor came down to our quarters this afternoon. He is in good health as usual. Capt. Bissell's health is improving rapidly. Dr. Gibbs is in Washington still but will join the company as soon as he gets well.

The evening papers state that Gen. Banks has turned up at Weldon, N.C. which is but sixty miles from Richmond. The Rebs have got their eyes opened. Find that they will soon know how long their government has to live. I hope it will not expire until after the president's proclamation goes into operation.

Leonard, Myron, Theodore and myself have built ourselves a bunk to sleep in which is much healthier and warmer than sleeping on the floor.

There is quite a crowd of stragglers here for supper. They belong to the 12th Army Corps (Gen. Williams). They are on the road to Fredericksburg.

Tell Aunt Julia that I am looking for a letter from her. Hope it makes its appearance soon. Tell mother that we, as a company, are in the best quarters soldiers can have.

Our guns, which we have to polish until you can see your face in them, are admired by the old soldiers. They say they never saw a nicer company than ours.

Give my best respects to all the neighbors.

Yours affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #27

Alexandria, Va.

Dec. 27th, 1862

Dear Father,

I have partly finished a letter to mother and will start one to you.

I and the company are well as usual. We are still in our comfortable quarters. How long we will stay is more than anyone can tell. We may march at any moment.

The battle at Fredericksburg cast a shadow over us for a time. It made us feel discouraged and vexed but that has all gone away.

Another battle is expected soon upon the Rappahannock. Burnside will not stay long in one place. He will work as long as there is anything to do. The wounded that were brought here seem to have confidence in him. They say he will not give up the first time but will keep on until he has accomplished his object.

While writing, the boys who have been to camp came back with the news that the 19th had been ordered to the front, to report to Gen. Sigel. Whether this is true or not remains to be found out. If it is I will write before we start.

Capt. Pierpont of the 17th C.V. was here a week ago last Friday. Capt. Bissell saw one of the 5th C.V. who was wounded near where Dutton fell. This man was wounded. Dr. Bissell was doing up his wounds when they were both made prisoners of war. The doctor is a son of Lyman Bissell and a nephew of Capt. Bissell. Lyman Bissell is a Lieut. Col., in the regular army.

Sunday Evening--

Since I stopped writing I have been very busy all day. This morning Col. Kellogg came over to inspect the company, which he did. He found fault with those who did not have their leather stocks on--"dog collars" or "chokers" as the boys call them.

This afternoon we went over to camp for dress parade. This was the first time in seven weeks. Although we have not drilled as much as the other companies we have not fallen behind them but rather gone ahead of them.

The weather has been as warm today as in the middle of October.

Capt. Bissell and Lieut. Wadhams were out to Culpepper Court House. I think they saw the 5th C.V. The captain saw his nephew, the doctor. They came back with the news that a battle was going on between Stonewall Jackson, Siegel and Couch. They, the captain and lieutenant, could hear the booming of the cannon very plainly. The report came into town that we had driven the enemy back and cut him very badly.

Now that we have got things fixed comfortably we have been ordered to march. Will start sometime this week.

It is rumored that Col. Kellogg has been ordered to report to Siegel for duty. Another is from Maj. Smith that we are not going farther than the forts. Some of the captains said Co. A. would be left behind. Gen. Slough is up in arms against it. Has been or gone to Washington to get the order countermanded. One thing we are sure of and that is we have marching orders. We may stay a week or a fortnight before we leave.

One more death has taken one of our number from us. William Wilson died this afternoon in the hospital. He was a young man in the prime of life. He had jaundice and was taken to the hospital. At first he gained, but later developed lung and typhus fever. Last night they did not think he could live the night through. He breathed his last a little after two this afternoon. Whitney Smith, Robert Coe, Albert Nettleton (fifer) were with him when he died. Lieut. Shumway went to see him but was too late.

He had the best medical care. The doctors did not know if he was a professor of religion. His home was in Harwington. His body will be embalmed and sent home. His parents are wealthy I'm told.

Dwight Kilbourn is well and is liked by the company. He is faithful and sees to everything himself. There is not another orderly in the regiment who is better liked. When any of the men are unwell he will excuse them if possible.

He wishes me to send his best wishes to you and hopes Providence will permit him to return home before the first of next July.

I have not seen Whiting Smith in some time. He is an attendant at the hospital--is liked very well and will stay all winter I think.

I received the letter with the \$2.00. Thank grandpa for me. Tell him that I hope I shall make good use of it.

Do not fret or get in a stew about our leaving here. If our going into the field will help end the war I shall go willingly and share with those brave men who have fought and suffered so much the dangers of the field.

Theodore is rapidly improving, will soon be with us. None of the boys are dangerously sick. Seth Pond and Henry Hotchkiss are well. Ed. Pond is getting better. Has flown around rather lively of late because of a letter from home.

Give my best respects to all the neighbors and love to all uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.

Yours in haste,
Lewis Bissell

Saturday, Dec. 27th
Alexandria, Va.,
Headquarters A. Co., 19th Regt.

Dear Mother,

I received yours and Pa's Christmas eve. I received one from Uncle Frederick dated the 18th. He says he has been sick but is very well at present.

I am well as usual. Have not been sick since I wrote last.

The weather is warm for this time of the year. There is not much frost in the ground.

Leonard is troubled with the rheumatism in his knees. Theodore V. is much better. Is down to the quarters today. Will soon be able to join the company. Myron and Mr. Cables are well. Leonard Bradley's health is poor. Joseph is unable to do duty. He has the rheumatism in his side. Wm. Hall has got his discharge and will start for home the fore part of next week. His health is very poor.

The health of the company is very good. None of the men are dangerously sick. Col. Wessells is able to sit up part of the time. Col. Kellogg is smart and full of fight as ever.

Things looked rather dark for a time after the battle of Fredericksburg, but begin to brighten up now. Another battle is expected there soon. Troops have been sent to Fortress Monroe within a day or two. The Rebs may have a fire in their rear before they think of it.

A week ago last Friday early in the morning four steamers loaded with wounded men from Fredericksburg arrived here.

Lieut. Wadhams called for a guard to keep order. I volunteered but was relieved soon after by a guard sent from the provost marshals.

I put away my musket and helped carry the wounded off the boat to the ambulances. This was hard work. To carry one of the wounded very far is about all two stout men can do.

All of Co. A's men who were off duty and not sick helped all day. Then next morning my arms were so stiff that my musket seemed more like a crowbar than anything else.

The first thing that attracted my attention was the slaughter house smell caused by the wounds of the men. The men lay on hay spread on the decks and in the cabins. There was hardly space to place one's foot. It was a sight never to be forgotten by me.

The wounds had been dressed two or three times. Their clothes around the wounds were stiff as boards with clotted blood.

Most of these were not dangerously wounded although one died on the passage up the river. There was one major badly wounded. One captain they thought would not live. Two colonels both wounded in the feet, one of them Col. Hatch of Penn.

It was a sickening sight. Some were shot in the legs. One had a ball through both legs below the knees. One who was more talkative than the rest had one arm and one leg shot off. When I asked him if he could get onto the litter said, very coolly, that he could not run or double quick but could help himself which he did. When asked if his wounds pained him very much said they did but added that he would make the best of it. Said he had been in that fix before but not so bad a one as this. He had been in nine battles and slightly wounded twice before.

One other had been hit in the head, was speechless and one arm and one leg was paralyzed. Another, the most painful sight I ever saw, was a young man, shot in the jaw. I doubt if he will recover. The ball hit him below the ear, broke both bones and came out on the opposite side. His jaw dropped down making him an object of pity. He had no use of his mouth and could not drink without great pain.

One man fifty years old or over was hit in the abdomen, the ball coming out in the small of his back. Strange to say he was alive. We had to carry him on our shoulders to the hospital. I saw the ball. It was as large as the end of your middle finger.

There was one wounded rebel and one rebel adjutant general. As soon as the inhabitants found it out they came to see him. Would pass by the other wounded to talk and sympathize with him. It made our boys scowl to hear such talk. He had a servant with him, dressed in a rebel uniform. He was a hardlooking specimen of humanity.

There were seven hundred brought here. I told Lieut. Wadhams it was enough to melt a heart of stone. "Well," he replied, "when you see blood dripping through the canvass you will be seeing something of the horrors of war."

He helped with the rest. Most of the time he was loading ambulances. His word was law to the onlookers whose curiosity had led them in our way.

The most dangerously wounded were sent to Washington.

The ball of butter Mr. Cables gave to me. It happened this way. Myron had a letter saying you put a ball of butter in with his and forgot to put a label on it. That was all that was said about it in the letter. Mr. Cables came to me with the butter and told what was in the letter.

I have all the clothes I want. I bought a blanket for \$.75 which if I can't carry will send home. Wish I had two to send home for horse blankets.

I have not seen Sam Merriman or heard him say anything about Agusta. What you wrote I have not heard him say a word about.

Alexandria is one of the worst places in the U.S. All sorts of iniquity is to be found here.

From your son,
Lewis

Letter #29

Headquarters Co. A. 19th Regt. C.V.
Alexandria, Va.
Dec. 30th, 1862

Dear Father,

I received your kind letter Monday the 29th. Had just mailed one for you.

You wish a reply immediately but as I was on duty last night have put off writing until tonight. Thought I had better get all the sleep I could.

The city has been in a ferment of excitement with all sorts of rumors afloat.

The rebel cavalry has made a raid at Dumfries. Quite a number of our cavalry were captured by the "Rebs." Some eight or nine escaped, came in and told rather large stories which flew like wildfire Sunday. This all happened at night.

An order came for the 19th to march which they did. Were but five minutes in falling into line of battle. Started on a double quick, went two miles or more and stayed until morning. Some of our men went up to town and heard that the regiment had left.

Saturday last an order came for the 19th to report to Brig. Gen. Bob Tyler, former colonel of the 1st. C.V. Artillery. He is to have a brigade composed of the 1st Artillery and the 19th who go as a support for the artillery.

Gen. Tyler is in Connecticut at present.

The regiment is to be relieved from duty in the city by the 26th Michigan Regiment.

We are ordered to join our regiment tomorrow forenoon. Whether we shall or not I do not know.

We are to leave the camp sometime this week for the forts. One thing we will gain by it is less night duty. We have just got everything fixed to suit our notions--now we are to leave it all.

We will not go to the front soon--not until Gen. Tyler comes back. Then we will act as support to the artillery.

The box sent by the masons has arrived and the fraternity are at work refreshing the inner (mason) man so we are having the evening to ourselves.

Today two more men of the regiment left earth for eternity. One was from Company B and one from Company F. Their names I have not learned.

I and all the rest of the company have been busy all day getting ready for the morrow and I have not had time to read that part of your letter to Geo. W. Mason but shall read it to him and others.

There is no regimental library that I am aware of. We have all the religious reading we have time for. A regimental or company library would be patronized by most of the men.

Christmas is a day of pleasure and everyone that can had a Christmas dinner. My dinner was cabbage, potatoes, bread and butter, which for me was something extra.

One thing we will gain by leaving the city--that is we will not have so many bad neighbors around us. Profane language is used by rich and poor. Men of high standing in society make frequent use of it as if they thought it fashionable. The army is a hard place. Swearing is heard on all sides.

I received the Observer and it seems like old times to get hold of it now and then. Leonard reads it also.

Last Sunday afternoon the company went over to camp for dress parade. Got there just as the chaplain was closing the services, so we missed that.

I have been to church but twice since we left camp. I have been on duty five Sundays out of seven.

Nearly all the hymns are in my pocket hymn book. These I often read which brings to mind the days gone by. The men do not sing much as most of them have colds.

Some of the men bought a fiddle from which now and then a patriotic air or a tune of sacred music is played. The men whistle the accompaniment. Many a pleasant hour is passed this way.

Perhaps you have received before this time a record of our company. I was foolish enough to subscribe for it. It cost me one dollar.

Give my love to all.

Lewis Bissell

Jan. 7th, 1863
Co. A. 19th C.V. Alexandria, Va.

Dear Father,

I am off duty with the mumps. They have made their appearance on the left side of my face.

It is raining this afternoon. The major was going to try his hand at battalion drill but the rain has put a stop to his showing off his military prowess. I should not be afraid to place Wadhams beside him any day.

The reason why I have not written you about sending a library to our company or regiment is that your letter arrived just as we were packing up to leave for camp and that Mason was busy after we got to camp.

I had to go on guard and Mason had the mumps so he could not write, and I did not urge him.

I do not know that we could carry a library with us if we should move very far from here. I have plenty of reading both religious and secular.

Some of the men have papers sent from home.

A Soldier's Library would be patronized by most of the men in our company. The only trouble would be taking it with us as the government will not allow the wagons to carry any unnecessary baggage. While we are in camp here or if we leave for the forts a library would be very acceptable to all who wish to read.

While we have been in camp the chaplain has been in our tent two or three times but I have not heard one word or sentence on a religious subject from him. I do not know how much good he has done in other companies but can say for certain he has done precious little good in our company.

Our regiment has been highly favored thus far. We have not been on the battlefield, exposed to the weather or had to lie out in the rain and snow in thin shelter tents.

It is the prevailing opinion that when we move from here we will go to the front.

Gen. Tyler's brigade is composed of the 1st. Ct. Artillery, 1st Wisconsin Artillery, 2nd New York Artillery and 19th C.V. The whole brigade excepting our regiment is artillery. This is not yet known for certain.

Gen. Slough has offered our quartermaster thirty wagons to use in transporting the baggage of the regiment to the camp near the forts, if we do not go farther.

Apollos Buell is sick and has gone to a private house as it was difficult to get him into a hospital. Leonard has gone to take care of him as Leonard is not fit for duty.

The news from Vicksburg is cheering. The forts manned by the 1st. Ct. Artillery fired a national salute in honor of the victories that our forces gained at Vicksburg and Murfreesborough. If we could have as cheering news from the army in Virginia!

The sad news of the loss of the Monitor has cast a shadow over the Naval Department.

Our company has got the start on the other companies on mumps. Thirty-six are on the sick list from our company.

Curtis Wedge is sick with the measles. Hinsdale, Barber, Coe, Nettleton and Osborn Smith are still in the hospital in the city.

No news from the Army of the Potomac.

Jo. Vaill writes that they have built a new log hut six feet high. Will hold all of their squad. They are all well.

I have been told that Henry Wadhams was wounded at Fredericksburg. The Lieut. has not heard from him in some time.

We hope for the best.

Yours affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #31

Headquarters 19th Regt. C.V.
Near Alexandria, Va.
(Jan. 11, 1863)

Dear Brother, (Phill)

I received your letter New Years day. Was glad you wrote.

I spent New Years day on regimental guard for you must know just as we got ourselves comfortably fixed we must march for camp.

Orders came to Capt. B. to report to Col. Kellogg Wednesday. The first news of our leaving came Saturday last. Wednesday the patrol was taken off.

Friday night an order was read at dress parade, to wit--"The 19th Regt. C.V. is released from further duty in the City of Alexandria and is transferred from the command of Gen. Slough and ordered to report to Brig. Gen. R.O. Tyler, for duty."

We were relieved by the 26th Michigan.

Now we have no duty but camp guard so we can have the nights to sleep in. The regiment has to drill both forenoon and afternoon.

I wish you could have seen Col. Kellogg at dress parade. While the regiment was forming he sat on our woodpile.

Yesterday the whole regiment was on battalion drill. The colonel liked the appearance and said that he would not be afraid to put us beside any regiment this side of the Potomac.

Fred Bradley, Mattie Cables and Mrs. Bishop took us at the wrong time. Fred Bradley and Potter came Wednesday morning just as we were starting for camp. Mrs. B. and Miss C. came yesterday morning.

Today the weather is very warm for this time of the year. We had a battalion drill and colonel put us through on a double quick which made us wheeze like old horses.

Judging from the order that the 19th has received we will leave our present camp and go to the forts. It is rumored that we are to go up to a place some two miles from here on Sunday next and be reviewed and inspected. Pa will see how well the president's proclamation is obeyed by Col. Kellogg.

Col. L. Wessells is to leave, on a furlough, for home. He starts sometime next week. He rode over to camp today. He looks poorer that when he left Litchfield.

I should have liked to have been at Aunt Mellissey's with you and a hearty shake of the hand and some of the good things to eat.

When next you see the cousins give my best respects to them and tell them for me that letters would be very acceptable.

Tell Pa that I have not sent him an answer as we have been very busy.

George W. Mason is sick with the mumps. Curtis Wedge, Frank Bunnell, Leonard, Russell Curtis, Lyons and Lieut. W. have the measles.

Give my best respects to all the folks. Tell Pa that I shall have Mason write as soon as he gets better. I do not know anything about the chaplain having been away a week.

Write soon. From your affectionate brother
Lewis Bissell

Dear Father,

I have waited for Mr. Mason to write but he has been sick with the mumps and is now busy helping the captain make out the State bounty.

We are to pull up sticks at eight in the morning.

I am sending you the bounty for you to draw the money on. You can get it at a discount in Litchfield at the Phoenix Bank or you can get the whole amount by sending to Hartford or New Haven.

As to the library, I am sorry that I have been unable to be certain whether we were to go to the front or to the forts.

We are to encamp near Fairfax Seminary. Col. Kellogg says that we are to stay until we go home so I think you can get a library for our company as soon as you wish.

I think we will stay there until spring unless something bad happens to the Army of the Potomac.

I was on guard all day yesterday and until three P.M. today.

The regiment went to Fairfax Seminary to be reviewed by Brig. Gen. Tyler. I did not go being on guard yesterday. Last night it rained and the ground was muddy and sticky.

The regiment looked fine--the guns glistening in the sunshine and the straps and brasses polished up in the best style.

It is all very fine to look at but why must all this parade and show be on Sunday. As if there was not time in six days out of seven to have a review and the like.

The men came in rather muddy having gone three miles and back without unslinging knapsacks.

Thursday Mr. Seth Logan and Mr. Chas. Mason made their appearance here much to the surprise of Mr. George Mason. Friday they left for Fredericksburg, Mason to see his brother and Logan to fetch home one of Company I's boys in the 8th C.V.

Lucien Rouse of Co. G left this army to march in the armies of Heaven. I heard of his sickness a few days before he died. If I had known of his being in the army I should have made his acquaintance before he died.

I received a letter from Aunt Mary Ann P. saying that they were all well and that Harley was busy most of the time going to school in New Preston. Was so busy that he could not find time to write me.

I hope Phill will not neglect writing to me as a letter from home is like sunshine on a stormy day.

As tomorrow is to be a busy day I must close.

Leonard and Apollos Buell are in the city yet. Apollos is not much better.

All of our sick in the regimental hospital are to be sent to the General Hospital in the city.

A man from Co. F died yesterday. Was escorted to the city this evening. This makes twenty-three deaths in our regiment.

Sergeant Calvin B. Hatch of our company is very sick in the hospital. Was taken very suddenly.

There are sixteen sick with the mumps in our company.

After we get settled in our new camp I will let you know how we are getting along.

All of our tent floors, etc., are to be carried for us.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell



Lewis Bissell at "Shooters Hill" campsite, 1917

The Marshall House, Alexandria, Va. Is it still standing?



CHAPTER 3

Fort Worth
(January 22, 1863-May 10, 1863)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Washington area was guarded by a series of forts and the 19th Connecticut was sent to man Fort Worth which stood near Fairfax Seminary. While at the fort, the men were often engaged in the hard labor of building and repairing other forts, such as Fort Ward. In addition to their infantry drills, the soldiers also began to drill as a heavy artillery regiment since they had access to the heavy guns.

The state gubernatorial election of 1863 was of great interest to the soldiers since Governor Buckingham was running against a "peace" Democrat. The men made their feelings quite clear in their "Appeal to the People of Connecticut" (see appendix).

The rains that plagued Lewis Bissell in January created the conditions for Burnside's army that led to the demoralizing "mud march." Being stuck in the mud symbolized the quagmire of the Army of the Potomac and Lincoln finally replaced General Burnside with Joseph Hooker. Hooker reorganized the army into the basic form it would have when Bissell was attached to it in 1864.

Along the coast, a continuing battle at Ft. McAllister was taking place while on January 31, Southern gunboats made a successful attack at Charleston. Action in these areas continued into the spring.

In the West, General Ulysses S. Grant, after numerous attempts to circumvent Vicksburg, began his campaign to take the city by a dangerous, overland route. A Confederate force was sent to stop him, but Grant was the victor in their battle at Champion's Hill on May 16.

After Hooker completed his reorganization, he marched the largest Union army ever assembled on an assault of Richmond. Hooker constructed a good strategy, and after adept maneuvering it looked as though he was on the verge of a great victory. But Lee stole the initiative and Hooker lost his nerve as the Confederates handed the Army of the Potomac an ignominious defeat at the Battle of Chancellorsville during the first days of May, 1863. It was a costly victory for Lee since Corp Commander Stonewall Jackson was mortally wounded. For Lincoln, the loss at Chancellorsville illustrated the fact that he had not yet found his general. To add to his problems, Clement Vallandigham was arrested without Lincoln's sanction. Not wishing to give undue publicity and create a cause for the Copperhead leader, Lincoln had to defuse the explosive issue with haste and delicacy.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. The major theme of this chapter is politics. Bissell observes and comments on the political situation in the North and in the army. Northern politics always seemed to be mixed up with army administration and Bissell opines on this matter. Bissell's regiment becomes directly involved in a political contest and the regimental officers suffer from bad politicking among themselves. What impact did camp politics have on the daily lives of soldiers? What influence did the way regiments were raised, officers chosen, and generals appointed, have on the quality of army life?

Though Bissell and many of his comrades show an intense interest in national politics, how extensive was their participation? Were they old enough to vote? Was it possible for eligible voters in the field to cast a vote?

How do Lewis Bissell's values square with his political views? In this chapter, Lieutenant Colonel Kellogg takes severe action in response to some camp politics. Why does he take the action he does and what do you believe will be the outcome of his actions? In explaining Bissell's reaction to Kellogg, determine whether their values are in conflict.

Northern Society. The great issue being debated was whether or not to continue to prosecute the war. The gubernatorial election of April, 1863 in Connecticut addressed this question. Recently, this issue was debated in regard to Vietnam, and it is interesting to note that Lincoln was opposed to the Mexican War of 1846-1848. What makes one war (WWII) popular and another (Vietnam) unpopular? Why were so many opposed to the Civil War in the North? What impact did the "peace" parties have on politics? Did the peace candidates' values differ significantly from Lewis Bissell's?

Another interesting aspect is how a society at war handles protest. Examples from the Vietnam era can be compared and contrasted to the Civil War era. What types of divisions did each war cause in American society? What is the importance of the war leader? What qualities are important? You may want to compare Lincoln with Davis, and both of them with other American war Presidents such as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Army. Do Bissell's political views reflect those of the typical soldier? How does the army deal with soldiers who have "copperhead" sympathies? How has the army influenced the views of Bissell? What would happen if the army were largely comprised of anti-war people? Do you know of any instances where, because of political differences, an army has refused to fight?

Finally, in this chapter you will be able to assemble more information about illnesses in camp (note they have changed locale) and medical care. As Bissell becomes more adjusted to army life, he begins to mention other goings-on that begin to fill the picture of what camp life was like. Look for types of recreation engaged in as well as a listing of different camp followers. What does he like and dislike about his existence in a fort?

ITEMS FOR IDENTIFICATION

nits: The bane of a soldier's existence.
horehound: Strong medicine?
Union Meeting in New York: What did they discuss?
Daily Tribune: Pro-Lincoln?
sutlers: Maligned?
Christian Commissions: What did they do?
Washington Chronicle: The administration's mouthpiece?
Governor Buckingham: How popular was he?
Hotchkiss: Made shells, did he make money?
Julius Stahel: "A revolutionary"?
Henry Ward Beecher: What did he sermonize about?
George Stoneman: A raider?
John James Peck: Were the rumors true?
George Duncan Wells: Dies the day after he becomes a general.

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

No study of the Civil War would be complete without an examination of its most imposing figure, Abraham Lincoln. There are many aspects of Lincoln's life that are interesting research assignments, including: his dealings with the Radicals, his search for a general, the reasons for the Emancipation Proclamation, the elections of 1860 and 1864, the way in which he assumed control of the government, opinions of him during the war, and what he symbolized to the North.

Two available biographies of Lincoln are Benjamin Thomas' Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Oates' With Malice Toward None. Some of the many sources that address the issues mentioned above are: Lincoln and the Radicals and Lincoln and His Generals by T. Harry Williams, The Emancipation Proclamation by John Hope Franklin, Lincoln's Decision for Emancipation (Lippincott's America's Alternatives Series) by Hans L. Trefousse, Lincoln Reconsidered by David Donald, and The Lincoln Nobody Knows by Richard Current. There is also a chapter about Lincoln in Richard Hofstadter's The American Political Tradition.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

This is one of the most enduringly popular of Hemingway's novels. It is a grim and powerful novel, fusing a love story with a war story. Published in 1929, it is semi-autobiographical in nature, reflecting something of Hemingway's own experiences in World War I.

Hemingway had attempted to enlist in the military services in 1917 and early 1918, but had been repeatedly rejected because of a defective eye. He finally entered the war working on the Austro-Italian front in northern Italy, where he was wounded. Decorated for heroism and hospitalized in Milan, he met and fell in love with a Red Cross nurse named Agnes von Kurowsky. Despite his entreaties, she refused to marry him. These personal experiences form the basis of A Farewell to Arms.

In the history studies for chapter three, you will be examining the politics of the war at that particular stage in Bissell's letters and you will be trying to determine how Bissell's values square with his political views.

Note examples from A Farewell to Arms of how politics intruded upon World War I. What problems were there in the Italian Army of morale and discipline? How were these problems dealt with? You should consider the original sense of the word "decimation", and compare and contrast the approach of Americans in the Civil War and the Italians in World War I to desertion and going absent-without-leave. How does a modern army cope with these problems?

One of the most intriguing aspects of this novel is its narrator, Frederick. What does he tell us about himself? Describe him physically and emotionally--if you can. Why did he join the Italian Army as an ambulance driver? Is he in any sense a pacifist? What are his values in general terms and more specifically, his attitudes towards the war in which he is involved? You might also speculate how his experiences have changed his values. Is he an idealist or a cynic--or simply a pragmatist? Find examples of irony in the narration and speculate why Hemingway might have decided to adopt that tone. The narrative point of view is complex and is a very distinctive feature of much of the writings of Hemingway. If you wish to explore this further, you should read For Whom the Bell Tolls, a novel of the Spanish Civil War, and The Sun Also Rises, which is about a group of young Americans in post-World War I Europe.

One essential approach to the consideration of the nature of the narrator will involve study of the use of vocabulary and sentence structure. Note especially the use of adjectives and conjunctions. You will be required to produce a short parody of Hemingway's style as exemplified in A Farewell to Arms; you should certainly attempt to convey a similar tone and point of view through your use of language and sentence structure.

The narrator of this story is a young man caught up in a war situation, although he is not directly involved in combat. How do his personal feelings square with the demands made by an army, an organization that requires the strictest discipline and obedience? Does he in any way put the demands of the war before his personal

feelings? What is his attitude to his wound, and to killing? There is one most compelling scene involving the shooting of officers who have deserted, retreated, or lost track of their regiments. How does our narrator express his feelings--if at all?

Text: A Rumor of War by Philip Caputo (alternate for chapter three)

This book was published in 1977 and is not a work of fiction. It is an autobiographical account of the author's experiences as a young infantry officer in Vietnam, 1965 to 1966. In his introduction Caputo writes:

War is always attractive to young men who know nothing about it, but we had also been seduced into uniform by Kennedy's challenge to "ask what you can do for your country" and by the missionary idealism he had awakened in us. America seemed omnipotent then: the country could still claim it had never lost a war, and we believed we were ordained to play cop to the Communists' robber and spread our own political faith around the world.

As are so many stories of war, this is a book about the betrayal and disillusionment of the ideas of youth. Yet this story is also about the disillusionment and consequent reappraisal of attitudes of an entire country. Any war has enormous repercussions not only on the individuals who participate directly in it, but also on the whole community of individuals that make up the culture. The Vietnam War is still a very profound and immediate tragedy, and many of the veterans of that war are still young men. America in the 80's is a very different country from America in the 60's; much of the change has been brought about by the Vietnam War. From your own knowledge, and information given in the book, identify some of those changes, and give examples of both pre- and post-Vietnam War American attitudes and actions--especially in the area of foreign policy prior to the late 60's. Would the hostage situation in Iran have transpired as it has done in the 60's? Is America in any sense overcoming the guilt and lack of self-confidence caused by the debacle in Vietnam? What other external factors have shaken American confidence and drastically affected our way of life? The energy crisis is particularly worth considering.

A Rumor of War is about modern warfare. You should note how the technology employed is radically different from that of previous wars; communications and transport are much more rapid, and the firepower is powerful and devastating. Planes and helicopters play a very important role. Yet, it is still the individual soldier who must suffer the fear and horror of the front lines. Where are the front lines in the Vietnam War?

The organization of the armies involved differs enormously. You should observe the differing political goals of the American military forces and of the Vietnamese guerrilla insurrectionist armies, and you should note how the Americans, despite an overwhelming technological superiority, were extremely prone to severe morale problems. Why is this the case? Why were the Americans in Vietnam, and how might this affect the individual fighting man? Was there a coherent political philosophy on either side?

It will be interesting for you to compare and contrast the communities from which Caputo and Bissell came. Why did each man feel compelled to join the service? Is there any desire on either man's part to escape a constraining and limited environment? Can you imagine your choosing a similar course in order to establish your own independence of identity separate from the family and community among whom you grew up?

Your writing assignment is to imaginatively present the feelings of a young man or woman who has just received a draft notice. Employing a first person narrative technique, show the perhaps ambivalent feelings that the young individual may have. Construct a social and family background appropriate to your character (this may well be circumstances similar to your own!) and through an informal colloquial writing style show how your character needs to be free of the family and community of his childhood and youth, yet how the character might also fear the demands of a rigidly hierarchical organization such as the army or navy. Your narrator may even be a determined conscientious objector--or a young person who has always wished to be part of the armed forces. Whatever type of individual you select, do try to show the fears and relief involved when decisions are made for him and illustrate the agonizing doubts of youth concerning career and future.

Letter #32

Thursday, January 22, 1863

Dear Father,

Perhaps you are out of patience because I have not written.

I have not been well for ten days. Have done very little duty but am getting better and shall do duty in a day or two.

Nineteen of our company are in the hospital; namely, Chas. Hinsdale, Chas. Barber, Lyman Catlin, Robert Coe, Albert Nettleton, James B. Lyons, Dr. Gibbs, Ed. Pond, Serg. Calvin B. Hatch and others.

My sickness was a very sore throat, bad cold, hard cough, my bones ached and I ached all over.

All that I have had to eat I have had to buy so my money is running low.

Has the company record pictures of the captain and lieutenants?

I have lived mostly on onions and codfish pancakes.

I have gotten a hold of a poor pen. Will hunt up a better one.

Yesterday and night before last it rained hard. The mud is ankle deep.

Newsboys have just come on to the camp ground.

Our camp is pitched among stumps which we have to grub up. We are within forty yards of Fort Worth where cousin Ed. Smith is stationed. I can sit in my tent door and look into his tent door.

Col. Kellogg is in command of the fort. He takes the officers of the 19th down there and drills them on the guns. The colonel intends making this regiment into an artillery regiment. All we have to do now is guard our camp and dig up stumps.

We left our old camp Monday forenoon. Gen. Slough sent fifty teams to carry our floors, boxes, tents, etc. The day was warm and pleasant. We reached our present camp about one P.M. Our tents arrived, the ground was laid out, tents pitched, floors laid and we were ready for the night.

Gen. Tyler was colonel of the 1st. artillery and is very much like Col. K. Is not so large a man. He wears glasses but sees everything.

Last Sunday he inspected our quarters and the entire regiment. When he came into our tent everything was in order. "Well," he remarked, "where a tent is kept as clean as this there will be no sick." Nevertheless, we had three sick, Jones, Stone and myself. We are all getting better and will soon be all right.

Sergeant Hatch is very sick, once it was feared he would not live but now he is gaining slowly. Apollos Buell has been quite sick and at one time it was thought he would not live long. His brother William came last Tuesday. Says he will stay until Apollos is better. George Hatch is laid up with rheumatism. Leonard Bradley is improving fast. Will soon be with the company. J.B. Lyons is in the hospital. Is working for his discharge. Beebee Hall is not well and is waiting for his discharge. Jo. Bradley is troubled with

rheumatism. Brooker is sick and in the hospital.

We have but fifty men in the company and only forty fit for duty. When the company comes out for dress parade the company looks small to what it did when we were in Litchfield.

Chas. Merriman is sick.

I am told the surgeons are fixing up a house nearby for a hospital. When fixed it will be the best one this regiment has had.

George M. and wife and the Hon. George C. Woodruff and wife were here Thursday of last week. Mrs. W. said she saw you a few days before she left. How pleasant it is to look upon the faces of those just from home.

Have seen Dea. Adams. He left for home this morning. He has had a rather stormy time. Mrs. Capt. Peck will start for home today. William Cothran of Woodbury is here.

I am glad you were successful in drawing the full amount of money on the State order. The men around here have sold them.
(remainder missing)

Camp Fort Worth
January 27th, 1863

Dear Aunt,

Your letter came to hand last night and I was glad to hear from you. I have been looking for a letter from you for some time.

I am as well as usual but was sick for eight or ten days after we came here. Had a very sore throat so I could not speak out loud. Also I had a very hard cold.

I went to Dr. Lawton and he excused me to my tent for three days. He did not give me any medicine. I lived on oysters, roasted onions and toasted bread as I had no appetite for anything else.

I was very weak and my head was heavy and felt like a brick. I made tea which helped me some.

Now I am well.

Yesterday I went out and chopped wood nearly all day for the camp.

We have to mount guard with our knapsacks on just the same as if we were on the march. Also, we have to wear them at dress parade.

Gen. Robert Tyler formerly colonel of the 1st Ct. Artillery told the secretary of war that he would have the 19th C.V. a heavy artillery regiment in one month and ready to take the field as such.

Col. Kellogg takes the commissioned officers to the fort and drills them on the guns. Yesterday the non-commissioned officers were drilled. Soon the whole regiment will have to drill on the guns. When Col. K. gets hold of a gun he is in his element.

The weather today is stormy. It rains quite hard and the camp is all mud.

The newsboys are crying out their papers and that Gen. Burnside has resigned and that Gen. Hooker is in command of the Army of the Potomac.

To me things look very dark for the Army of the Potomac. In the west things look brighter. When the army takes Vicksburg we will have gained one of the most important posts in the west. It is next to Richmond in importance.

I think the war may end by the first of July. Perhaps it will

not end in two years. Well, if I do not have any harder time than I have had since I left Camp Dutton I think I can live it through.

There has been some mismanagement on the part of the government. I hope we shall be able to find where the pinch is and remedy it as speedily as possible.

The health of the company is improving. Ed. Pond is in the general hospital in Alexandria. He pretends to be sick but I think the surgeons will cure him of all of his complaints.

Cousin Ed. Smith's company is in the fort. I can stand in my tent door and look into his tent door. He is as healthy and tough as a knot.

Sergt. Calvin B. Hatch of our company, from New Preston, is very sick. At one time the surgeons thought he would not live but he is recovering slowly.

Mr. Myron Osborn is expected today or tomorrow. Dea. Abrams made us a visit. He had a stormy time. He and Charley went to Washington and stayed two or three days.

Myron Kilbourn is well. So is Seth and Ferris Pond. Joe Bradley is sick with the mumps. Geo. Bradley is laid up with the rheumatism. Leonard Bradley will be able to rejoin the company in a few days. Leonard is still with Apollos Buell who is very sick but is gaining slowly. I do not know if he will get his discharge. I am in hopes he will. I think he deserves it if any one in the company does.

We are very comfortably situated. We have pancakes every morning for breakfast.

The morning Apollos went on inspection I was curled up in my tent with the mumps. When he came into the tent he looked as white as a sheet and said his head ached. He spread his bed and laid down. He is still in bed.

I had the mumps on the left side of my face. I did not have them hard but could not eat without trouble. Was off duty but five or six days.

Our camp is just west of the Alexandria Seminary which is used as a hospital. The camp is pitched in the midst of stumps which we have to dig up.

Col. K. intends to have a fancy camp.

I do not know of much more to write about. If convenient I should like a box of butter with which I can make a poor dinner pass off very well. Cheese is also very good especially that which you sent me the last time.

Give my love to grandpa and grandma.

From your affectionate nephew

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Write soon and have Charley write if possible. Give my love to Aunt Mellissa and Cousin M.

Letter #33

Camp near Fort Worth, January 28, 1863

Dear Father,

I received your letter on the 26th inst. and was very glad to hear from home. At the same time I received a letter from Aunt Julia. I am at present as well as ever.

Today it is snowing quite hard from the northeast.

Last night I was surprised to find Mr. Ben Mason in my tent with a box in front of him eating his supper of sugar, pudding, and coffee.

Mr. Osborne is in the city with Goodwin. Will be here as soon as the storm is over. How good it is to see friends from home and talk with them. It seems like old times.

Merritt Stone's death was very unexpected. He was in the General Hospital in the city. His body has been embalmed and will be sent home as soon as the money arrives to pay the expenses.

Mr. Wainwright left for home on Tuesday of this week. I heard him preach six or seven times while he has been chaplain of the regiment.

Yesterday the news of the removal of Burnside and the change of command to "Fighting Joe Hooker" was received. I hope the government will leave him alone. If so, he will do something toward putting down the rebellion.

When Vicksburg falls into our hands we will have one of the most important parts in rebeldom. It is next to Richmond in importance for when Vicksburg falls we will have the Mississippi from its mouth over all its branches. Then Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana will have to bid goodbye to the Confederacy.

Chas. Merriman is sick with the measles and in the hospital.

All of the men in our company are gaining in health. Leonard is still with Apollos Buell. He is about the same as when he went to the city with Apollos. Leonard Bradley will soon be with the company. He has been sick ever since the first snow storm when we were in the A tents.

As I have but little time to write shall have to close with a goodbye.

Dear Sister,

I have received the letter from you and Pa and was very glad to hear from home. Tell Phill that he must write to me for I think he likes to read my letters as much as I do his. When he gets as far away as I am he will want to hear from home.

Dear Brother Frank:

I think you are or will be more of a letter writer than Phill or Sam. I am very much obliged to you for writing so often.

Jay Watrous is sick with a hard cold. Mr. Minor cannot speak aloud. Has not for three weeks. John Bishop is in the same fix.

We are encamped no farther from Fort Worth where cousin Ed Smith is than from your house to Mr. Kilbourn's.

I hope you will go to the spelling schools and learn all you can. Give my best respects to Dick and Mr. Ben Johnson.

From your brother,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #34

Camp near Fort Worth, February 1, 1863

Dear Father,

As there is no inspection today I am at leisure to write or do anything else that I think proper.

By request of the Governor of Ct. inspection and reviews will

be held on Saturday instead of Sunday, as far as practical. Therefore, Gen. Tyler ordered the inspection to be held on Saturday. We, that is, our regiment, were inspected by the Acting Assistant Adjutant General. So today we have to ourselves.

Col. Kellogg is in command of Fort Lyons. He has gone to inspect the fort today. Wilson Potter is his orderly and has gone with him to wait upon him, etc.

Mr. Osborne and Mason have gone to Alexandria to see if they can get passes to go to Falmouth and see the boys in the 8th C.V. Mr. Mason wants very much to see his son, Porter, whom he has not seen in two years. Col. Kellogg helped them all he could--gave them a letter to the Provost General.

Robert Watt had a letter from home saying that Mr. Fred McNeill will make us a visit before long. Mr. Osborne said that he saw you at the mill Saturday before he left. I hope the next man after Mr. McNeill will be you.

The barrel has not yet arrived. We hope it will arrive safely. Mr. Mason and Mr. Osborne can tell you how much we appreciate such things as are sent from home.

Instead of drawing our full ration of bread, we draw flour and exchange part of it for cornmeal and have pancakes for breakfast. We have a griddle and one can cook for the whole tent.

Charley Adams has been detailed as guard at Gen. Tyler's headquarters. They pick one man from each company.

The health of the company is improving. Forty men report for duty.

Apollos Buell will soon have his discharge. I hope that Leonard will have his also as he is no better.

George Bradley is still laid up with the rheumatism and is recovering from the mumps.

Leonard will join the company before long. Curtis Wedge is nearly over the measles.

Those in the General Hospital are Chas. Barber, Chas. Hinsdale, Robert Coe, Albert Nettleton, Henry Minor, Andrew Brooker, Geo. and Leonard Bradley, and Ed Pond. These are all I can think of.

Chas. Merriman, Corporals Jo Coe and Hubbard are the only ones sick in the hospital here.

Albert Jones is unfit for duty--so is Jackson Tompkins. All are getting well and will be able to do duty soon.

We have had quite a severe snow storm. It commenced on Wednesday and lasted all day. Snow fell to the depth of six inches and the country had a wintry aspect. The snow has not all gone yet.

Today Dwight Stone, Theodore and Robert Watt are on guard. Wilson Potter has gone with the colonel. The rest of the tent are busy about one thing and another.

Tell mother that I want her to write and also get more cloth and make me a pair of shirts. These that I have are full of nits which got on in being washed with other clothes. After this I shall wash my own clothes as I shall have more time. It is almost impossible for one to keep from being lousy.

The weather is mild and the snow melts slowly.

All military operations in Virginia are at a standstill for the present. I think the war will keep on for another year if the generals do not move with more life than of late.

How are things going on at home? Have you butchered your hogs yet? How does the hay hold out? Have you fed out the stock in the Osborne lot? How do you like the barn stable? Have you got the west end of the cellar done yet? Do you intend to build the addition this spring? How does the black mare stand the winter? Have you had much sledding this winter? Does Grandpa Bissell get up to the glass barn this winter to fodder? Does he go into the woods as usual or does he stay at home? How does Charley flourish? Does he make a good many night excursions this winter? Has Mr. Wainwright arrived home yet? When will Mr. Southgate start to join the regiment? I hope he will prove himself an able and efficient chaplain. Col. Kellogg could not find any fault with him. I think the colonel would like him.

There is to be preaching at the Seminary Chapel at 2 P.M.

Yesterday the regiment was inspected by the Adjutant General of the brigade. He gave the doctors a blowing up. Said that the 19th had a set of rascals for doctors.

The weather has been so stormy of late that we have not had much to do.

Tell Phill to write. When he gets into the army he will want to hear from home and will know the value of a letter from home.

I am as well as ever. Have grown fleshy. Most of the men who have kept their health have grown fleshy.

What is Phill doing this winter? Is he not going to school?

How do you get along with the thrashing? I think you will have a busy winter if you fetch around by spring.

What has become of Mott Johnson? I have not heard anything about him this winter.

How does Mr. Osborne get along this winter and John Carter and Lucious? Does he keep his house in the stable all of the time?

There are but nine in our tent at present.

Give my love to all the family. Tell all to write that can and those that cannot to get someone to write for them.

Yours affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. What do you think of the change in commanders in the Army of the Potomac? It seems that Burnside felt incompetent to command the army. I do not know if Hooker is of the same stamp. I rather think he will fight if he can get the chance. It will be a stubborn fight on his part.

I am in hopes Vicksburg will fall before long and then we can have the Mississippi River for our own use. What do you think about it?

7 P.M.--Tonight the Articles of War were read at undress parade. It is raining tonight. Mr. Mason has just finished reading one of Henry Ward Beecher's sermons.

Myron is well. I shall be under obligations to you if you will be so kind as to send me \$5 or \$6, if convenient. I dislike to send for money.

(not signed)

Letter #35

Camp near Fort Worth, (Feb.) 5, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter of the 27th of January and of January 31 I received

on the 1st of February and one on the 4th inst.

I have waited for the barrel which arrived this afternoon and which was opened with due ceremony. Everything was found just as you had packed it.

If you had as much pleasure in packing it as we had in opening it, you know how much pleasure we had and how we value it.

If Phill were down here he and the rest of the family would know how to value such things as butter, cheese, pickles, and dried apples.

The doughnuts were very good. The ham we value very much. Many thanks to Mrs. Wetmore for the ham.

We had some of the sausage for supper tonight. It made us think of home.

I am very glad you sent the sage and that Mr. K. sent some herbs to Myron.

Lieut. W. said he thought butter and dried apples the most valuable edibles that could be sent to soldiers.

The pickles and vinegar are very useful. The mustard and vinegar will be relished by all.

I shall answer back your letters in one which will save paper and postage stamps. I think I can write all the news in one.

Mr. Ben Mason started to visit his son, Porter, at Falmouth, who he has not seen in two years next May. Mr. Osborne could not get a pass to go with Mr. Mason as he had no business there. The government will not give passes to anyone unless they have business or sick friends. We have been looking for them today. But it commenced snowing this forenoon and this afternoon it rained very hard so they did not come.

Sergeant Hempsted and Corp. Mason have gone to recite their lesson to Lieut. W. this evening, so we are having a very quiet time.

Myron, Wilson Jones and myself are gathered around the candle writing while Theodore and Dwight Stone are fixing to go on guard tomorrow.

Now that our barrel has come the boys say that as soldiers we will live like fighting cocks.

We have pancakes every morning for breakfast. The sausage gravy will do very well to put on the cakes instead of butter. The cheese will come in handy at dinner time. We cannot thank you and other patriotic friends sufficiently for the things which the barrel contained.

The war news is not very important with the exception of the naval affair off Charleston harbor.

Day before yesterday it was very cold and windy. In the afternoon the colonel called out the regiment for battalion drill. The wind blew clouds of dust so that some of the time the colonel could not give an order nor could we see him. The dust filled our mouths, eyes, ears, hair, neck, clothes and noses.

When we came into camp we looked as if we had been out in ash heaps all summer.

Gen. Tyler sent for him and gave him a blowing up for drilling his regiment in such a storm of wind and dust. The colonel had so much whiskey down that he was reckless of himself and his men.

You wanted to know my tent mates. They are Chas. Adams, Chas.

Barber, Chas. Hinsdale Theodore F. Vaill, Dwight Stone, Wilson Potter, Robert Watt, Albert Jones, Myron Kilbourn, Geo. W. Mason, George Hempsted, Apollos Buell, Leonard and Ed Hempsted. Those are all of my tent mates. Five of them are out of the tent.

Charley Adams has been detailed on guard at the generals headquarters. Apollos and Leonard are in the city. Barber and Hinsdale are in the hospital in the city.

We have but nine in our tent now. Leonard Bradley has returned to the company. He has been sick since Oct. 25th but he looks well and healthy now. How long he will remain, I cannot tell. Jo is quite sick with the rheumatism--so is George Bradley.

When you answer that letter of the Rev. C.H. Bissell give him my respects.

As it is time to make our bunks, I must close for the evening.
February 6--

It rained last night and this morning.

Tell Mr. Kilbourn that the President's Proclamation will not bring the end of the war any sooner as far as I can see.

If the negroes were employed by the government to do all the hard work and fight when a chance was to be had it might do good. If they are to be set free they, as well as the white man, might imperil their lives for freedom.

I think the war will last longer than most people anticipate. It seems to me that the negroes will play an important part in finishing the war.

The right man has not made his appearance yet. In my opinion, Frémont will play an important part.

Proclamations do not amount to much except to aggravate the enemy and make them hate us more than ever.

There have been too many words and too much politics mixed up with the carrying on of the war. If we had had fewer words and if fight and activity was the order of the day, the war would have ended long ago. The more we talk and the less we do the longer it will last with a greater sacrifice of life.

In regard to Mr. Wainwright, I think that the Lieut. Col. put all the obstacles he could in the chaplain's way so as to get rid of him and get a man more fitted for the place. Perhaps it will make no difference who is chaplain.

The other day the colonel told the major that the chaplain had been telling stories about him. And that the next time he met him, even if it was in the pulpit, he would wring his nose. This conversation Hempsted of our company heard word by word.

Gen. Tyler sent for Col. K. and gave him a blowing up for taking his men out in such a storm of wind and dust.

Yesterday was the coldest day this winter. The air was stinging cold.

Fred Jennings is as well as he ever was at home only he cannot get his whiskey. He has a cold at present.

I hope that Mr. Southgate will have more life and determination than Mr. Wainwright had.

I should like very much to have you or Phill come down here and make me a visit. All it will cost will be \$24 down and back. You

can stay with me and cousin Ed. Smith and it will cost but little more.

Mr. Ben Mason has arrived from Falmouth--says that Ed Wadhams will go home on a furlough of ten days. I have not seen Mr. Mason yet but he is in camp and will be in our tent soon.

G.W. Mason is corporal of the guard today and his father is at the guard house with him.

I do not know how you could have put more valuable articles in the barrel than you did. They were just what we wanted. The butter, pickles, and vinegar were most enjoyed.

I am as well as ever. The sickness I drove off with tea and cough medicine.

I have not heard from Leonard for several days.

Myron is going to Alexandria and if I find time shall send to the P.O. by him.

Mr. Mason and Lieut. Wadhams have come in so I must stop writing for the present.

Mr. Mason and Myron have started for the city. Mr. Mason leaves by the six o'clock boat. Will reach home Saturday at 2 P.M.

It has cleared off cold and is freezing.

I am writing by candle light. Dwight Stone and I have stuck our bayonets up in the middle of a bench. He is sitting on one end and I am sitting on the other. Both of us are writing.

Myron has just returned from the city and saw Mr. Mason start for home. He saw all the boys of our company. Says they are getting along well. Apollos sits up for an hour and a half at a time. He is some better.

Leonard is no better.

Ed Pond is able to walk around the hospital. Told Myron that he would be able to come back to camp in two or three weeks. Did not want to come until Col. Wessells returned.

Since I commenced this letter have heard that Mr. Southgate will not be chaplain because a Congregational minister has received the appointment.

I am very glad if it is true.

Cousin Ed and Lyman are well.

It is time for me to close and write to other members of the family so I must bid you goodbye.

From your son,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Sister,

As you have taken the pains to write to me, I must answer which I do with pleasure.

As you are not old enough to read writing I shall hurry.

I have not seen the president of late. You can see on the map I sent you very nearly where our camp is located. It is just west of Fairfax Seminary. No farther than from our house to Mr. Osbourn's.

The sausage is very nice so are all the good things sent in the barrel.

Give my best respects to all of the small folks.

From your brother,

Lewis Bissell

Dear Father,

I received yours of the 6th inst. this afternoon. Also received one from Aunt North and another from Cousin Harley. All were read with pleasure.

Aunt North says Uncle is feeble but they get along very well for them.

I am as well as the healthiest man in the regiment.

I received the \$2 you sent me and am very thankful for it.

The weather--it is raining this evening and has been raining or snowing most of the time since we encamped here. The camp has been muddy all of the time.

I am very sorry to hear of your loss of the old stag for it will bring all of your work to a standstill. Well accidents will happen to the best of people--you as well as me.

Yesterday, I went to Alexandria to see Apollos and carried him his discharge. When I gave it to him he said that he would rather have his health than all of the discharges made out in Washington. He wanted to rejoin the company.

Leonard is not much better but will come back to the company as soon as Apollos goes home. I found him gaining quite fast. He is able to walk around the room and put on his clothes.

One of our men named Henry Minor from Northville is in the general hospital very sick. Is not expected to live from one day to another. Have heard this evening that he will live but a few hours. He went out as stout and healthy a man as there was in the company. He had the typhus fever and then the measles. He was getting better and was able to walk around his room. Mason saw him and thought he was going to get well. The next we heard was that he was very sick.

I do not know whether or not he is a member of any church. He is a very good man in the company. I like his society. He took part in the prayer meetings in the city quarters.

We have to drill in heavy artillery every morning. Six men from a company are taken every day. It is awkward work to us. I can get along with the hand spikes. They are levers about six feet in length and have turned handles. The heavy guns are thrown forward and backward with them. The light guns we roll forward and backward by taking hold of the spokes in the wheels.

In a former letter I wrote you the names of the men in our tent.

Our new chaplain has not arrived yet. I do not know his name or where he lives; but hope that he has more life than our last one, or go home.

We have had no preaching in over a month. There have been ministers here on two or three Sundays. It has been so muddy we would have had to stand.

I am very glad you sent the horehound. The cough that I had when Mr. Logan was here has entirely gone. I never had so bad a cough in my life. I was so hoarse that I could not speak aloud. I think it was catching as nearly every one in my tent had it as well as many in the company and regiment.

Sergt. Calvin B. Hatch is getting well. He is able to walk around the hospital and out of doors some.

If you happen to be in Morris sometime in the next few days you will see Corp. Hall. He has his discharge and is on the road home. He looks healthy and well for a man who is getting his discharge. Everyone in the company as well as the doctors and officers say the same. He has never been so sick that he could not take care of himself. There are others in the company who are and never will be fit for duty in any army.

Frank Parker who was transferred to Company K and made a corporal by Capt. Peck has been reduced to the ranks--so much for disobeying orders.

Lieut. Wadhams has been acting adjutant for a week past. Deming being laid up with mumps and a lame neck. He has recovered so as to be able to perform his duties again.

The letters in the Enquirer--part I will admit is true but I think I have seen enough of Doctors Lawton and Hazzard to know something of how they treat sick men who are barely able to crawl around.

Mr. E.C. Robinson cannot stuff what he has written down my throat.

Dr. Plumb I think is one of the best surgeons but the sooner Lawton leaves the better. He is a rascal.

I think Robert Watt has been transferred from Company K in place of Ed Sedgwick who Capt. Peck made 2nd Sergt. The first sergeant is now sergeant major. He is orderly of the company now. Robert is well. Has not been sick as I know of.

Friday morning, February 10--

This morning it is clear and cool. The sun has not risen yet. The boys are all busy. Wilson is fixing to cook pancakes.

Last night we had quite a time of it. Some had gone to bed, some were standing around the stove, the wind was blowing quite hard, when a sudden gust tore up the tent pins. The wind got under the canvas and before we knew it the tent went over leaving me out of doors. We went to work and put it up then went back to bed and slept sound all night.

I must hurry through with this letter.

From your son,
Lewis

Dear Mother,

Your letters are always welcomed. I know you have so much to do that you cannot write as often as other members of the family.

I have found a remedy that will kill the nits. It is boil the clothes in salt and pepper, then, while dripping wet, hang them out of doors at night and let them freeze.

My stockings are pretty well worn but they will last me some time still. My shirts and drawers wear well. They have not ripped one stitch yet. My pants that I drew at Camp Dutton wear well. I have drawn a new blouse and a pair of shoes to wear around camp and drill in. I had my boots soled once this winter. They wear well.

I shall take the best care I can of my health.

I have plenty of clothes--all that I want. If, when this letter arrives, you have not bought any cloth for shirts, you need not. The shirts I have are all I need.

We all use out of the barrel. Each helps himself to what he wants. We all share in each others boxes and barrels.

I cannot think of much more to write. Myron is as well as ever.

Give my best respects to all friends and neighbors.
From your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #37

Headquarters, Co. A 19th C.V., Fort Worth, Va.
February, 22, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter of the 11th I received on the 19th inst. and read it with pleasure and profit.

I am at present well and able to do my share of duty. Hope this will find you in the same condition.

Last night I received a letter from Aunt Julia which I shall answer in a few days.

The regiment was very busy last week. Cousin Ed's company has left Fort Worth and gone to Fort Richardson and our regiment is garrisoning Fort Worth now.

Three companies under the command of Maj. Smith are assigned to the fort. Their business is to keep the fort in order.

We have had to move our camp once more. We have good camp grounds now. They are close to the fort, are dry and in a pleasant place.

I hope we are settled down for awhile but there is no telling how long we will stay here. A soldier's life is one of uncertainty. They cannot tell how long they are to stay in one place.

Last Thursday Mr. James Lyons was very much surprised by the arrival of his wife and Mr. David Welch of Milton with all of the news from Litchfield.

Cousin Kate is well and is staying in Sergt. Kilbourn's tent which he kindly offered for her accommodation. She is well and in comfortable quarters.

I think Mr. David Welch will get a few new ideas into his "secesh" head before he goes home. If he does not then he is a Democrat blockhead and the sooner he leaves these parts the better for him.

We are expecting Col. Wessells here this week.

You wrote about the library. I hope it will be used by all of us--read and reread. It has not arrived as yet. However, when it does we will hail its arrival with pleasure.

We have had no preaching in over six weeks. Religious services are held in the chapel of Fairfax Seminary. I have not been able to attend. Have been on guard duty or prevented by other military duties.

Last Thursday afternoon the colonel called the regiment without their equipment. He divided the regiment into two parts and formed them in two lines facing each other, about three rods apart.

There was plenty of soft snow on the ground.

"Now," said the colonel, "if the right wing can drive the left, so far, or the left drive the right the same distance, they win the day. All must take it in good part. Load at will. Load"

Each man made as many snow balls as he could hold in his arms. Then came the order. "Fire."

The snow balls flew thick and fast.

Since I commenced this letter, the mail has arrived and I received a letter from Uncle Erastus dated the 11th of February saying that they were all well.

They have had but little snow. The winter has been very mild and warm.

It is storming hard from the east and is very cold. Just such storms as you have in Ct.

Col. K. says that Norway has got over here--if not, then one of its storms has come.

I cannot write as fine as you do for I have to write on my knee and it is tiresome to write very long at a time.

Leonard has come back to camp. Apollos is able to take care of himself and will, if able, start for home Tuesday of this week with Fred Bradley.

He is able to walk around out of doors. Is gaining quite fast for him.

Our list of sick is growing small. When the spring comes we hope all will be well and those that cannot will be discharged from the service.

Give my best respects to Mr. Kilbourn and all of the neighbors.

Yours affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #38

Headquarters 19th C.V.

Camp Fort Worth, Va.

March 5, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter was duly received. I have neglected answering it until this late day of the week.

I have been very busy and have had a good many letters to write.

Last Saturday I received a letter from Uncle Fred dated Februrary 11. He says they are all well. They have finished the church and are to have a minister.

I am well as usual so is all of our tent except Leonard. He does not get any better. Two of our men have left the hospital and have returned to the company; they are Goodwin Osborn and Albert Nettleton. He is the fifer for our company. He is a very good man and is liked by all of the company and band. He is the second best fifer in the regiment.

An appeal to the men of Connecticut was sent to the Litchfield Enquirer. It will be printed next week. More than four hundred men signed it. Some did not sign for reasons best known to themselves. If you do not see the names of some you expected to see, you must not think them disloyal or in favor of Tom Seymour.

There are but few men in the regiment who want Tom Seymour elected and they are a miserable set of ignorant men who enlisted for money more than anything else. They have tasted of a soldier's life and now they want to go home. They do not care a red cent whether the Union is saved or not.

Tuesday Mrs. Geo. C. Woodruff came to make us a visit. It stormed some so she did not have a very good time. Ed Coe came with her. He gets \$40 a month. Mrs. Woodruff says she will start for home the last of the week.

Some half dozen of our boys went by invitation to Col. Kellogg's tent to see her as the street was very muddy. She leaves for home carrying the good wishes of the boys.

There was a lady with her, the wife of B.B. Hotchkiss the shot and shell manufacturer. Before she was married, her name was Bissell. She is acquainted with Mrs. Tim Allen and cousin Melissa Bissell. She seemed to be a very intelligent and smart woman. She has bright black eyes and appears as if she knew what she was about just as all of the Bissells ought to.

Mr. Richards is expected here today or this week. I hope he will stay over Sunday and preach. I should not object to him as chaplain.

We have the cheering news of the capture of Fort McAllister which is, I am told, the strongest fortification defending Charleston. The cut-off in the Mississippi is finished. There was fifteen feet of blue clay to dig through. This was done with a machine made for the purpose. It was finished under the eye and direction of Acting Brig. Gen. J.W. Bissell. He finishes what he takes on and does it well.

I wish all of our officers were as persevering as he is. Then we would have more victories and fewer defeats.

The money and the two postage stamps you sent in the last letter were duly received. The 12th of last January, I bought one dollar's worth of stamps and now have but three left. A letter usually costs from four to five cents. I am very much obliged to you for sending them. We are expecting to be paid near the 15th of the month and have four months' pay. The paymaster told the colonel that he would pay two months to last but if he would wait until the middle of March he would pay up until the first of March.

The weather has been very blustering and rainy. One hour it will rain torrents, the next the sun shines and everything looks pleasant.

Albert Peck stands it very well. He has not been sick much and works when told to. Leonard Bradley is down sick again. Geo. Bradley is gaining slowly. He will soon be at his post in the cook tent for which we will be very glad. He is the best cook in camp.

I have all the clothes I need. My stockings are pretty well worn but I have kept them darned. My boots stand it very well. I have worn off the soles that Mr. Pond put on and have had them soled once since--now they need it again.

Frank Bunnell has just come to the tent and says Col. Kellogg has sent in his resignation. There is a great deal of excitement in the regiment. I do not know how much truth there is in it.

Give my best respects to all the friends,

Yours ever the same,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #39

Headquarters Co. A., 19 C.V.
Fort Worth, Va.
March 7, 1863

Dear Father,

I received your letters of February 28 and March 1 in due time and read them with pleasure.

I hope you take as much pleasure in reading my letters as I do in reading yours and others. Those moments are the pleasantest I have.

Mr. Richards said that if he succeeded in getting a pass to Falmouth he would, if possible, preach to us upon his return Saturday evening and would be in camp in the morning. But if it is a stormy day and we do not have inspection, we will not see Mr. Richards nor hear him preach.

As yet we have not heard who is to be our chaplain. I do not know that Col. W. knows anything about it.

We have had no inspection in nearly a month as it was rainy every Sunday in the month of February and the first Sunday in March.

Cousin Kate Lyons is keeping house in a small tent which Mr. Lyons has stockaded making more room. She is very comfortable.

There are quite a number of women in camp. If we should have to move they would start north in a hurry.

Last night Col. Wessells stayed in camp with Capt. Bissell. He is here now (2 P.M.) and will stay tonight. He will take command of the regiment soon.

Col. Kellogg sent in his resignation or was about to when the regiment heard of it. The men in each company got up a paper asking him to withdraw his resignation. This he did.

The reason why the paper was circulated was that the Lieut. Col. was the only man able to drill the battalion or handle it in the field.

Things looked rather blue for a while but the boys soon fetched him around. Some think the resignation was a grand hoax.

If it were not for his military ability, I should just as leave he did resign. But I have said enough about the Lieut. Col.

Friday night, just at dark, I spied Geo. H. Baldwin and James Campbell. They are still with us.

While I am writing Leonard is reading the Daily Tribune to the boys about the great Union meeting in New York.

We watch with much interest the doings of the people in the north and the battles in the south. Perhaps we do not read as much as you but read all the news from the north and south.

We are living very well. Wilson Potter has received a box from home and we all have had a taste of good things.

Riverius has sent a box to the company and Mr. Mason has one on the road.

The health of the company--There are about forty men in the regimental hospital--only three from our company. Corp. Joseph Coe, Nelson Newberry, and L.O. Bradley. None of them are very sick. Dr. Plumb is very well liked.

There is not much news to write about.

Maj. Smith is attending a court-martial in the city, called by order of Maj. Gen. Heintzelman.

We drill very little as it rains almost every day. Where it does not rain the ground is so muddy that it will almost pull off ones boots. The mud will stick most when it is about the thickness of mortar. Mix a little sand with it and when dry is quite hard.

We are in good health with the exception of colds.

All the boys send their best respects.

I remain as ever your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. This evening Capt. Bissell came into our tent. He says the col. has sent in his resignation and that a paper has been drawn up in

every company asking him to reconsider. This he has done.

Col. W. has come from his quarters near Alexandria. He came into our tent and made himself agreeable to all of us. How we all wish that Col. Kellogg was of the same stamp.

This afternoon we were all made glad by the arrival of the Rev. Mr. Richards. He came from Washington last night where he spent the evening at Secretary Chase's. I have seen no one in camp whose smiling face gave me more pleasure than Mr. Richards, unless it be Col. Wessells.

Col. W. took him around the camp and the fort. He leaves for Falmouth tomorrow but will make every possible effort to preach to us next Sunday. I hope he will. The good men and officers can get the privilege from Col. K.

When Col. W. introduced Mr. Richards to Col. K., they were in front of our tent. The Lieut. Col. was on his horse. Mr. R. made himself agreeable and the Lieut. Col. seemed pleased with his visitor.

This afternoon a new flag staff as handsome as any in Ct. was raised. The Stars and Stripes was run up after which the men gave three hearty cheers.

We have good news from Vicksburg and Fort McAllister. We try to keep up with the times. It is rumored that it has been evacuated by the Rebs.

Mr. R. says he saw you at church last Sunday. I wish that the next individual I see from Conn. might be you or Phill.

The boys in the company want to know if you are coming to make us a visit. They all say that they would be glad to see you here.

By the way, there has been a story in the company that H.B. Bissell had turned Democrat. They asked me if I thought it was so. I told them no.

The nomination of Tom Seymour has drawn out "secesh" sentiment of the disloyal Democrats. Hope they show themselves so they can be marked.

But I am running on a useless lingo.

Letter #40

Headquarters Co. A, 19th C.V.
Fort Worth, March 18, 1863

Dear Father,

Your very welcome letter I received last Friday afternoon-- also last night one came from Miss Mary Ann Jennings and one from-- well no matter.

Dwight Kilbourn is very sick. He was taken Thursday night and has failed ever since. Leonard is staying with him and says he is deranged and talks all of the time.

Dwight has been worrying about being examined for promotion. One of the first sergeants is to be promoted to a second lieutenant. The first sergeants of the regiment have been examined but Dwight was not on account of his sickness so of course will not have a chance.

Seven o'clock in the evening--

It commenced to hail this afternoon and keeps it up still. It has thundered all of the afternoon but has not rained.

There is but little news about and but little in the papers at present. The election in Ct. is talked about in camp. There are some here who are sick of war (in fact all of us are) and they wish to get home no matter what becomes of the country. They enlisted for money and nothing more. Now they wish to go home and think if Tom Seymour becomes governor he will do all he can to get them home without regard to the nation.

However, they are few and of an ignorant class who know only what is told them. If it is right or wrong it is all the same. If you could stay at the guard house with the guard for one day you would get some ideas of human nature. You would be surprised at the ignorance of some when you heard them talk about the war and the negroes.

We are expecting news from Charleston and Vicksburg. It is reported that a peace meeting has been held in Charleston. I hope it is true. If this war has brought them to their senses the old saying will be true. "Where trouble begins there will it end."

Charleston was the Boston of this war and gun boats and iron clads will be the end of her and that before long.

There was considerable excitement out at Fairfax night before last. The report was that a strong rebel force was expected. Some ten thousand of our forces were kept busy all night throwing up entrenchments.

There has been some excitement in camp about the Rebels erecting breastworks some two miles from here and that they bore upon the camps of three New York regiments.

Capt. Peck of Company K was the first to see it and tell the news. It is also reported that a N.Y. regiment sent a guard of two hundred men to do picket duty in that vicinity. The guard was sent out to strengthen the lines for an attack was feared.

The boys have a good deal to say about Peck's battery and he does not like it.

There has been a story in our company that you had turned Democrat. Someone asked Leonard if it were true. He said no with a vengeance. Someone said that if Deacon Bissell had turned he had good reasons for it. It has all fallen through as I have not heard any more about it.

I wish very much that you would write a letter to Mr. George W. Mason or T.F. Vaill. They would be much gratified to hear from you. Mr. P.S. Beebee writes to Mr. Mason now and then. Wish all would write.

Tell Phill to write oftener than he does. I will answer to the best of my ability.

You wished to know how much paper and envelopes cost. Paper costs a penny a sheet, envelopes from 20 to 25 cents a pack and poor at that. A letter costs about 5 cents.

I am out of envelopes and stamps. I bought \$1.00 worth of envelopes in the last three months and \$1.50 worth of stamps, besides paper.

Did you receive a Washington Chronical, the paper we have in our tent every day?

Robert Watt has the New York Observer sent to him by a lady in

New York, so I have the privilege of reading it.

Mr. Richards visit was very short. Thursday he came up about noon and left about five. Sunday he came about 2 P.M. and preached, then left for Alexandria. Have not heard from him since.

I saw cousin Ed Smith a few days ago. He is as well and healthy as he ever was at home.

Lieut. Col. Perkins of the 14 C.V. has been in camp. He has an uncle in our company. His name is Norman Perkins and about the oldest man in the company. Col. Perkins left for his regiment last week. He was wounded in the neck at the battle of Fredericksburg.

We hear from Joe Vaill and Ed Wadhams. They are living in style and comfort at or near Fortress Monroe.

I think I have written you all the news.

Geo. Baldwin and Campbell leave for home today.

Very affectionately yours,
Lewis

Letter #41

Headquarters Co. A. 19th C.V.
Fort Worth, March 21, 1863

Dear Father,

One more week is nearly passed. It is the last day of the week and evening so now I have a little leisure time and I will improve it by writing to you.

By today's mail I received a letter from Wm. Cable written from Suffolk, Va. They are living in shelter tents but all are well.

Last Tuesday a sad catastrophe happened on the railroad. About eighty men of the 143rd N.Y. Regt. and twenty of our own went out on the cars to load wood for our camps.

About eleven miles from here the trains ran into a mule throwing two cars off the track onto a large pile of wood. There were forty or fifty men on the cars that were derailed. Five were killed on the spot and four seriously hurt. One has died since.

Some of our boys had left the cars just before the accident happened. Lyman Smith and Seth Williams saw it all. L. said it was a sickening sight. One man had his leg cut off above the knee. Another was found under the cars with one leg cut off and one arm badly mangled. He was under a car wheel. The men tried to lift the car but could not. They had to cut a sapling and lift with that. Another was very badly hurt in the abdomen.

Hay was spread on the cars and the dead and dying laid on them. They ran to the city as fast as steam could draw them.

I went out today and helped load the train but returned to camp safe. It would have been a nice pleasant trip if it had not stormed which made it very dirty work in Virginia mud.

The country through which we passed was mostly woods with now and then a house and clearing. These houses are used by the government for the accommodation of pickets. Most of the wood is cut by contrabands and drawn to the railroad by Irishmen.

There is little news in camp.

This week Mr. Abija Cathin of Harwington and Mrs. Coe, wife of Corp. Joseph Coe of our company, arrived. Coe is not expected to live from one hour to another.

When he enlisted he was a tough and healthy man. He was first taken down with the mumps after that he had the measles. He had

nearly recovered when he caught cold and was taken with a fever. Since then there has been but little hope of his recovery.

The doctor told him he thought he would be able to get home to die. Since then he has been failing.

He did not lose his composure when his wife arrived. They were married after he had enlisted.

This afternoon Leonard O. Bradley's wife arrived. She left Washington this afternoon. Her presence will cheer L. very much. He is getting better slowly.

Sunday morning March 22--

This morning the weather is dubious and muddy under foot.

There was an order issued for a brigade review and inspection today but as the boys say, "The Almighty is our side" and inspection was put out of the way.

The paymaster has not yet arrived and money is scarce in camp. I am out of "spondulix," as the boys say--that is money. If you can send me some I shall be very much obliged to you. We have been looking for the paymaster every day. It has got to be a by-word among the boys. Some of the men have traded out nearly all of their wages at the sutlers. Some have run in debt \$40 and over.

Col. Wessell's health is improving. He spends most of his time in camp. He looks much better than when he first came back from home.

There has been a rumor in camp that came from headquarters that Gen. Slough, military governor of Alexandria, has been to Wash. and asked that the 19th or a part of it do patrol duty in Alexandria. Gen. Heintzelman told him he would do nothing to interfere.

Col. K. says that if we have to go back to the city he will resign and go home.

The citizens have offered to contribute from \$2000 to \$5000 for our comfort. The mayor has been to ask Gen. Tyler consent to have the 19th go back. The general said "No."

So far as I know this is rumor.

I must close. Give my love to mother and all of the family and friends. I hope I shall hear from you soon.

I remain--as ever, yours affectionately,

Lewis

Letter #42

Headquarters 19th C.V.
Fort Worth, Va.
March 26, 1863

Dear Father,

It is evening and I have a little leisure time so will improve it by writing to you.

I have just finished my supper of pancakes and coffee. Theodore is finishing his and then Shakespeare or something else will have to be looked into.

Since I commenced writing Corp. Wooster of Co. D. has come into our tent and has read to us an article addressed to the voters of Ct. from the 13th Ct. Vol. Perhaps you have read it. It has the ring of true metal.

I should think that the Tom Seymourites would be ashamed to show their heads. If they were to come in our company we would show

them how much we think of them and in a way that would take them by surprise.

But it is no use writing because if Providence has decided that Tom S. is to be governor, we will have to put up with it.

If we could have our way, Tom S. would be put out of the way-- "Away down South in Dixie." There will be anxious looks on the faces of the Connecticut troops on the 6th of April.

There is but little news to write about. Things in camp go on very much the same as usual.

Last Tuesday a sad accident happened which may prove fatal to 2nd Lieut. Marsh of Co. H. He was out hunting with Capt. Jones of Co. F. They were not far from the railroad when a revolver in the hands of the captain went off at half cock.

The bullet passed entirely through the Lieutenant's face, entering just above the upper jaw and coming out on the right side near the temple. The doctors say the chances are ten to one against his recovery.

Tuesday just before dark I was very much pleased to see the face of Mr. Joseph B. Ives of Goshen. He says he left home four weeks ago. He is now engaged as an agent of the Christian Commission. He distributed papers and tracts through the regiment. This morning he left for the front to be gone four or five weeks.

I have not heard from the library yet. Mason received a letter from Riverius Marsh saying that if the library had not arrived he would see about it.

I am near the end of my sheet. I find I am mistaken.

Last Sunday our company lost one of its number. Corp. Joseph Coe departed this life. His wife arrived a few days before his death. I think that in an earlier letter I wrote you all about him. He was respected by the officers and men.

Give my love to mother and all the family and friends.

Yours as ever the same,

Lewis

Dear Sister Amelia:

I shall have to give you more credit than most of the family. I see few little girls in this part of the country.

I would like very much to see you but I shall have to wait. I don't know how long but I'll not be home this spring.

I suppose now that school is out you help mother all you can.

I would like to write to you oftener.

Tell Sam that he has not written in a long time.

I cannot think of more to write so goodbye from

Your brother,

Lewis

Since I have written this an express package has arrived with 50 cents to pay. It has not been opened. Will write particulars after it is open.

The library is all right. It has been put into the company chest.

Letter #43

Headquarters Co. A. 19th Conn. Vols.
Fort Worth, March 28, 1863

Dear Brother Phill,

Your very welcome letter came to hand last Wednesday and was

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read with pleasure.

There is not much going on in camp at present. The weather is becoming more settled and we are having more drills.

Thursday afternoon we had a battalion drill with buglers who sounded the commands given them by the colonel. The colonel took us over stumps and through brush down to the foot of the hill on which the fort stands. He then formed us in line of battle and marched us up the hill on a "Charge bayonets." Every man was yelling at the top of his voice. It was a splendid sight to behold. Over five hundred bayonets glistening in the sunshine.

The colonel sat on his horse with one arm on the saddle horn and laughed to see the boys maneuver. The drill was over he had to brag to some officers how smart the 19th was. But the other day when on drill he damned the men in great style. Said that with fifty well drilled men he could whip every man of us.

Yesterday there were two Brig. Gens. in camp--Gen. Slough and Gen. Tyler. Gen. Slough is doing all he can to get us back to the city. I hope he will not succeed. If we can stay where we are all summer, it will be better for us as it is a more healthy location.

The ground is drying up so that they are plowing some. The grass has begun to show itself in wet places. Wheat is beginning to start.

Father writes that John Carter has sold his oxen. I have seen but one yoke of oxen this side of the Potomac. There are plenty of horses--not the handsomest but some that Uncle Sam has seen fit to give an honorable discharge. Perhaps Mr. Carter could make a purchase.

I suppose Old Tom will have to give up the harness to the colt and retire from active life.

You say that you do not write to the girls but go and see them. I presume that answers better and is more agreeable to both parties.

The last snow disappeared last Sunday.

There are a few niggers in camp. Most of them are servants for officers. Capt. Bissell has an old ducky who was a slave. When his master died he gave his slaves their liberty and a farm of six hundred acres and a stone house. When the rebellion broke out they had to leave everything and flee from their homes for fear of being sold into slavery.

Capt. Peck has one who I would not be afraid of putting by the side of Mott Johnson. I know he would out argue him. He is the smartest ducky I have seen. He has been in nearly every Ct. regiment. Lieut. W. says he went out in the 1st Ct.

Last night there was some excitement in the city of Alexandria. The guards saw several fires--one near Fort Lyons after the bells in the city had rung. After the fires went out volleys of musketry were heard from the direction of Fort Lyons.

The Lieut. Col. got up to see what was the matter--but soon all was quieted down. As of yet I have not found out what was the matter. A signal corps is stationed in the fort. It has been in operation for a week. They signal with a black flag with a white square in the middle. With this flag they make signs which are watched

from the next fort. They communicate with the next and so on all along the line of forts for miles.

We have got so we can drill some in the manual of arms. If I were home I could show you some things in the manual of arms and bayonet exercises.

I have drilled in the fort but once. Three companies are detailed in the fort and drill on the guns. We have a company drill in the forenoon. We have to drill in skirmishing. Lieut. W. takes the company into stumps and puts us right through.

Today it is raining quite hard. We are all snugly stowed away in our tent. Mason and Leonard are reading Shakespeare. Theodore is at work on his musket.

Col. Wessells health does not improve very fast.

The next time you see Dea (?) just give him my best respects and Mr. C. has D. also. You just tell Lute Carter that if he votes for Tom Seymour that I shall not know him if I live to get home.

I cannot think of more to write about so must close. All of the men send respects to all. Ed Pond's health is improving so that he will soon be on active duty. Leonard Bradley's wife is here.

Write soon--the oftener--the more you will hear from me.

Yours truly,

Lewis

Letter #44

Camp Fort Worth, Va., April 2, 1863

Dear Father,

I shall send this letter home by Corp. Cables.

I received two letters from you by yesterday's mail. If I had time I would answer them in full.

I received safely the \$3.00 but Uncle Sam's paymaster arrived in the morning and made my accounts all right up to the first of March.

I have not seen Mary Merriman yet. Suppose she has arrived at Fort Richardson. I do not know when or whether she has passed through Washington.

I received from the paymaster the sum of \$52 and shall send home all that I can of it. If I have a chance to go home shall send for it.

The way the furloughs are managed is this. After we had been paid off Lieut. W. told the company that nine men could furlough to go home and that all that wished to go were to step two paces front. Some thirty or more did. I did not, knowing very well that I did not stand a very good chance among so many. Some had business that needed attention and they were the ones that ought to go. After this, if there are any more furloughs to be granted, I shall work my prettiest to get home and see you.

I will send home by Mr. Cables the sum of \$35. I would send more were it not for this furlough business. Also we are expecting to stockade the tent, that is, raise it some two or three feet. Then there is \$1.00 to help defray the expense of embalming the body of Corp. Coe. I had to pay my cook bill of \$2.00 and shall have to get my boots mended. This will cost another dollar.

I borrowed some before I sent home for money but we expected to be paid off every day or two. In all I borrowed \$3.00.

I have not owed the sutler a single cent and hope I never shall. I trade but little with him but instead sent to the city for most everything I need.

It costs me more to live than it would if we were at the front. Here everything has to be just so slick. If not we catch a damning from the Lieut. Col. If a man does not keep things up to the required standard then that fellow is set down as a lazy fellow and is not respected by the company and the officers. Those that are up in the best style are thought the most of.

But I must close with a goodbye to all of you. If time permitted would write a longer letter.

Hope I shall be home soon to see you.

Lewis

Letter #45

Fort Worth, Va.
April 3, 1863

Dear Father,

I will finish answering your letter.

Yesterday nine men started for home on furloughs. Soon after they had left, we were pleasantly surprised by the unexpected appearance of Jo Vaill on his way home on a furlough of twenty-one days. He will show himself to you on Sunday at church if nothing happens.

There has been considerable excitement in camp for the past two days.

Col. Kellogg has gone on a furlough. How long he will be gone, I do not know. He did not like the way in which the furloughs were procured. Neither he nor Col. Wessells were consulted. It was handled by the quartermaster; Maj. Gen. Tyler did not like it.

The Lieut. Col. called upon the major, before leaving, and gave him a damning for the part he had played in procuring the furloughs.

The Lieut. Col. threatened to resign his commission and get out of the regiment. He said he had been insulted by the officers of the regiment and that while in command, if he could not have his own way, he would get out--cost what it would.

He went on to say that he had more respect for the rank and file than for most of the line officers, some such as Capt. Peck, he thinks less of than the lowest private in the regiment.

Now that nine men from each company have gone home, he (Col.) says every man will have a furlough if possible. Furthermore, if he could have his way he would have every voter go home and vote. Those that would not vote and vote right he would put on the horse until he came to his mind.

The weather has been very warm and springlike. The grass is showing in the wet places.

There is not much going on in camp. There is a company drill of an hour and one half.

While I am writing the boys are out in the street kicking footballs.

Leonard has just got the paper and is reading it for the benefit of all who wish to listen.

D.C. Kilbourn has just come over from the hospital for the first time since he was carried there on a little. He is gaining as fast as can be expected and will, I think, be on duty before a great while.

Ed Pond is getting better. He is now on light duty and soon will be on duty with the rest of the boys. He has found out that it does not pay to imagine himself better than the rest of the boys. It won't do for anyone to try and play the dandy down here. He must take his turn with the rest whether he likes it or not.

Col. Wessells has not taken command of the regiment yet. He will as soon as he is able. Some think that if he is elected sheriff he will resign and go home--if not, will stay with us. We all want him to stay. There is not a man in the regiment that wants him to leave. All think very much of him.

Some of the men who did not go home on furloughs are a little mad and if they could would vote for Seymour out of spite. Others think that if Seymour is elected they would get home sooner and that the war would end sooner than it will if Buckingham is elected governor.

Hiram Bradley's discharge papers have gone to headquarters. They have not returned yet. Dr. Gibbs have also.

You will see Lieut. Shumway I suppose. I was in hopes that Lieut. Wadhams would go home, as I think he would have as much influence at home as anyone. He came into our tent after the boys had gone and said he wished he could be at home as he would like to knock down some of those Tom Seymourites and if he met Tom himself on the street would ask him a few questions. If he did not give satisfactory answers, down would go his house.

Yesterday one of our men, Fred Jennings, was seen with a copper pin on his coat. The boys did not know if they ought to take it away from him. The Lieut. said "spit on him, kick him, and after you are satisfied, I will put him to ride on the horse." There the matter dropped, Jennings being on detached duty at a barn. He has not been in camp today. If he has the pin on, he will not have a very pleasant time.

There are plenty of peddlers around camp with their trinkets to sell but we have but little to do with them. The only peddler we patronize is a discharged soldier who sells the Washington Chronicle. When there is any news he tells it and does not stretch his stories.

The news is favorable so far. Not much progress has been made yet as I can see towards the capture of Vicksburg by our forces. I hope it will fall into our hands soon. Then, I think, we will have pretty much of all the west under our control.

Yours truly,
Lewis

Letter #46

Fort Worth, April 3, 1863

Dear Mother,

I received your very kind and motherly letter and was very glad to hear from you. I take much pleasure in reading your letters.

I am as well as ever. Do not have much to do now since furloughs have come in play.

Jo Vaill arrived in camp yesterday about an hour after our boys had left for home. He left for home this forenoon. By today's mail Mason received a letter from his wife stating that she had heard Jo Vaill was dead. But he is on his way home.

I must stop for the order has been passed around for battalion drill.

After drill--

This noon Good Osborn and Mason went over to the seminary to a Daguerreian gallery to have their pictures taken. The Daguerreian did it great style. Afterwards they fixed them to suit themselves.

I shall excuse you for not writing oftener for I suppose you have as much work as usual. Never mind the blunders. I make them very often. It is not easy for me to get along without making more blunders than anyone else.

A little more than six months of my soldier life has passed. How quickly it has fled. Hope that before the end of the next six months, I shall be home with you.

The library arrived safe and sound. It has been distributed among the company.

We have prayers in our tent every night after roll call. We hear a chapter from the Bible read and a prayer, then we take to our beds and sleep until morning.

You wished to know what was in the barrel sent from Chestnut Hill. There was butter, vinegar pickler, ham, dried apples, sausage and some other things that I do not remember. It was the best packed barrel I have seen. There was quite a large box of butter of which there is some left.

Our rations are very good. They consist of fresh meat, salt horse, rice, soft bread, potatoes, pork, coffee, sugar, salt and vinegar.

There is now in the hands of the treasurer over \$150.00. We have plenty to eat and not much to do but drill. Have to be on guard about once a week.

I expect there will be a change made here before long. If we do as much good here as anywhere else, I am willing to stay, but if the order comes to move, I am off with the first of them.

I have more clothes than I need for summer wear and shall send them home if I do not come myself.

I have plenty of yarn and thread left, also capsicum. I have all and more than I could expect.

We as a regiment have been highly favored thus far. We have not had any long and tedious marches nor have we had to live on hard tack and salt horse nor live in shelter tents out under the great dome of heaven.

Col. Wessells has taken rooms in a house near here but spends most of his time in camp. Am in hopes he will take command as soon as his health permits. He is gaining slowly and looks better every day.

The wife of Corp. Coe left with the Hon. Abija Catlin. Leonard Bradley's wife left for home with the furlough boys. She is a sister of one of our men. Her name was Barber before she was married.

She taught the school over by Sheldon Grannes, I think. Cousin Kate is very contented here. Lyons is not very well. He has not done duty for sometime.

When you see John Bishop talking in a very loud and boisterous manner you will think he has turned over a new leaf.

I suppose you will see Mr. Cable and he will tell you all you want to know about matters and things here. I will tell you more when I get home if I am so lucky as to be favored by the great mogul of military matters.

For some few weeks there has been quite a number of women in Co. B, and two small children in the bargain who make music by day and night without regard to any military orders from the colonel. They will give a challenge loud and long that cannot be mistaken by anyone.

Every day I am expecting to see Mary Sam's face. I suppose she is the same old sixpence. If she does not make a small stir when she arrives, then she has turned over a new leaf.

I have come to the end of my sheet and must close.

Hoping that this will find you all well and hoping that at no distant day I shall come home on a furlough, I remain for the present your affectionate and dutiful son,

Lewis

Letter #47

Fort Worth, Va., April 9, 1863

Dear Brother,

Perhaps you will read but little news in this letter as I have written nearly all I can think of.

The weather has been very pleasant for sometime but this morning is raw and cold, just as you have at home.

Today is our day for cleaning up as there is to be a brigade review and inspection. The major is very anxious to have the 19th appear to the best advantage and take the rest all down.

I hardly know what to write. Jo Vaill has left for home. Said he would come over and see you, eat apples, drink cider, and have a good time all around.

Cousin Ed Smith came down here yesterday in a brand new uniform. He looks every inch the soldier he is.

The Lieut. Col. has gone on a pass or furlough. I don't know which.

We had a battalion drill yesterday afternoon, the major in command with only nine line officers. All the rest were on a bust down in the city or in Washington on a spree.

I suppose you will have to scratch some to get around with all of your work. Don't I wish I could be at home and help you. But here I am and here I am likely to stay for some time to come.

I suppose that Charley will be riding out oftener and the girls will be having a gay time with him.

Some of the men have been down to the city on a drunk and got into the slave pen.

Theodore has gone out on guard and Good Osborn has gone out on the wood train. Lieut. Wadhams is in here smoking his pipe. He is

off duty and is not feeling very well. Capt. Bissell is officer of the day.

The camp is very still. It seems lonely now that the boys have gone home on furloughs. Some of our boys in the general hospital have gone home on sick furlough of twenty days. They have the start of us in camp who get only ten days at the longest. But that is better than none. At present one hundred more have gone home on furloughs. All started with smiles on their faces.

Dwight Stone is well and healthy. Myron stands it first rate. Ed Pond is getting better and will be on duty with the company before long. Seth Pond makes a very good soldier. The boys do not like his company very well. He is so snapish. Ed Oakes is as tough as a knot and bobs around like an eel on a frying pan. Henry Bradley is "all right on the goose" as the boys say, that is, on political subjects. Hope George will vote for Buckingham.

I must close by bidding you goodbye and ask you to accept these few lines from your brother,

Lewis

Letter #48

Fort Worth, Va., April 12, 1863

Dear Father,

Perhaps ere this reaches you I shall be on march to the front.

At dress parade this afternoon an order from headquarters in Washington was read. This order stated that the 19th C.V. and the 34th Mass. had been ordered to the front and that we should be ready to march by 12 A.M. the thirteenth inst.

We have been ordered to be ready to march but will not leave until we are ordered to. We will stay where we are until then.

Gen. Tyler has done his best to get us into heavy artillery service, but I cannot learn the result of his efforts.

The stockings and the yarn you sent by Mary Merriman were delivered to me today. Ever since I heard she was down here I have been trying to see her but I fear it is too late now.

I am provided with clothing for some time to come--have all that I can carry.

I am sending by Hiram Bradley one blouse that is nearly worn out, one wrapper and one pair of pants which you may use as you see fit.

All of my traps, etc., are ready for service. My health has never been better.

The boys are going to box up their extra baggage and send it down to Peck and Davis to be sent home or elsewhere.

Dr. Gibbs has been discharged also Hiram Bradley and Howard Baldwin of Harwington.

Myron is well and is ready, like myself. Leonard will be taken care of by the surgeons.

We don't care a single cent for Lieut. Col. Kellogg. The boys gave him three cheers at the station in Derby when they came down. It is said he bade the boys goodbye and cried like a baby. Some of the boys say that he voted for Seymour. I don't know how true it is. It is only a rumor.

When Lieut. Col. K. sent for the major to turn the command over (which he did in a very gentlemanly way) he kicked the major out of the tent and damned him with all the eloquence of his tongue.

Last Saturday we practiced firing blank cartridges in the guns in the fort. The guns made some noise, you may believe, but did not scare us any.

I can think of nothing more to write.

Yours in haste,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #49

Fort Worth, Va., April 18, 1863

Dear Father,

I am still at Fort Worth. Have not received marching orders yet. Do not think we will very soon as Gen. Tyler has received and take command of all of the defenses of Washington south of the Potomac. His headquarters are at Gen. Lee's house near Long Bridge.

There are but few troops around here. Everything is very quiet. The country seems deserted.

An order came a few days ago for three hundred men to go and load wood for Washington. One hundred and fifty men are sent out on the railroad each day.

Today the left wing drilled on the fort. Co. D. drilled on mortars. A lieutenant from the 1st Artillery was here to show how to work the guns.

They throw a ball about six hundred yards. The mark aimed at was a barrel. The shots were thrown in all. The tenth shot struck close to the mark. The first struck the farthest off. The mortar is about as long as it is around. The shell is about as large as a half peck measure. The bore is nearly two feet and a pound of powder is used to throw the shells. You can hear them screech through the air. When they strike you can see them explode. They were not filled with powder. Only enough was put in to blow out the plugs. They buried themselves about six feet. When fired they made everything around here tremble.

I suppose you hear all sorts of rumors about our marching but it is as I wrote you before, we are to hold ourselves in readiness to march when called upon.

Hiram Bradley will start for home next Monday. He intended starting last Tuesday but stayed on because of the orders and preparations being made for our departure. He thought he might see us off.

He will take home to you one of my woolen wrappers, one blouse, one pair of pants. I shall have no use for these, this summer, and I have all I can carry around with me if I have to march.

The weather is like what you have late in May. It is warm and pleasant out of doors.

Now that Col. Kellogg has "skedaddled" for home we are getting lazy. I have heard that he is sorry that he conducted himself in so disgraceful a way.

This forenoon I made the acquaintance of your school teacher, Mr. Taylor. He is a waiter for Lieut. Burnham. I found him to be a very pleasant and agreeable young man. Said he spent the night with you a fortnight ago today.

I suppose Col. Wessells health will not permit him to take command of the regiment. He and Gen. Tyler are in or have been to Washington. If possible, they will get a Regular Army officer who understands heavy artillery for colonel.

April 20th--

Yesterday it was warm and pleasant. Instead of a regimental inspection, we had a company inspection.

Col. Wessells took command for the first time since last October. Major Smith is sick with a hard cold. Adjutant Deming is unwell. Is staying in Alexandria. If possible will get a furlough and go home to recruit his health, which is very poor.

You see, we have not marched yet but we have to hold ourselves in readiness to move at any moment.

Sunday I went on guard and have just come off.

All of our company has gone out on the cars to load wood. They go within five miles of Fairfax Station.

Saturday another one hundred pounder was drawn to the fort by twelve horses. Before they reached here the wagon broke down so they sent here for help. Two large drag ropes were hitched to the rear of the wagon and three hundred men go on and took the gun through mud and ditches right up to the fort.

When the gun is mounted, which will be no small job, this fort will be very well provided for, having besides the two one hundred pounders some eighteen or twenty smaller guns.

I have not seen Mary Merriman yet but shall as soon as possible. I have applied several times to the captain for a pass, but since we were paid off it is hard to get one. So many want to go to the city. Only one pass a day is allowed a company.

I have sent home \$55 in all. The first was \$10, the second, a State order, and the last by Mr. Cables. I have forgotten how much money you have sent me. I had it set down on a piece of paper but have lost it.

You just tell Uncle Ev. that if he goes to the Legislature and does not support the government but goes for Jeff Davis, I will not own him for an uncle or know him if I live to get home.

Will you ask him what he thinks of the appeal sent home by the 19th and write me. Also tell him it will not do for anyone to wear copper pins in our company or in the regiment. Lieut. W. said that if he caught any of his men wearing them he would show them the beauties of secession doctrine on short notice.

When the orders came for us to be ready to march Capt. Bissell had just obtained provisions. Among other things he had a very nice ham. He did not know what to do with it as he could not eat all of it before we were supposed to start; so he asked Mason if he would like it. Mason said he thought that he could find a place for it. We got the ham and cooked it to carry in our haversacks on the march.

As we have not marched yet we have eaten all of the ham. It was very nice and something of a luxury, not to be had everyday.

Leonard Bradley is so that he can walk around. Comes to camp when the weather is pleasant.

Death has again taken one of our company, Nelbert Newberry, a young man about nineteen years of age. He left this army to march in the armies of Heaven.

When he enlisted he was as tough and healthy as the best in the company. He had an attack of fever some seven weeks ago. Was very sick but recovered and returned to the company. He was with us nearly two weeks when he was again taken down and failed very fast.

His father lived near neighbors to Mr. Brooks on the road to Wolcottville. I am told he is strong "secesh." His son was right the opposite.

I should like very much to hear that sermon of Mr. Richards but I am so far from home and shall have to stay where I am.

If possible, I wish you would send me the sermon some way. Everyone here who takes an interest in the soldiers would read it with pleasure.

We have cheering news from "Fighting Joe Hooker's" army. Hope he will be successful in the present campaign.

Write as often as you can. Give my love to mother. Leonard is no better. The doctor will give him a furlough or a discharge.

Not signed

Letter #50

April 27, 1863

Hiram will start tomorrow morning if nothing happens. He would have gone long before if it had not been for Jackson Tompkins and Leonard Bradley who have been expecting their discharge papers ever day for the past two weeks.

We are still staying here but there is at present some prospect of our going to the front. I am told Gen. Tyler has been ordered to the front to take command of an artillery brigade. That is what Col. Wessells says. He has been sent for by the authorities in Washington. He has not returned yet and it is nearly seven P.M.

Last week Friday five large siege guns of the Rodman pattern arrived and tomorrow they will be mounted in the fort.

Yesterday, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Merriman made me a visit. Sam is not very well. He has a bad cough. Is not on duty and has not been nearly all winter.

Mary is at her old business of cooking for the officers. Says she expects Gurt down every day. The doctor says, according to Mary, that Sam ought not to stay another week.

She brought me the paper and envelopes and the horehound. She says she may stay all summer or may go home in a week or two.

The health of the company is good. Lieut. Wadham's health is poor. He has left camp for the city hospital. This is the first time we have been without him. We are now like a brood of chickens without an old hen to take care of us. If we should lose him, it would be a severe loss to our company and regiment, for Col. W. puts a good deal of confidence in him. He is not considered dangerously sick so you need not be scared by stories or rumors that he is just alive, etc.

There is little going on but drill. Tomorrow we will practice firing blank cartridges. Our company drills in the fort tomorrow.

I have written my sheet full so shall have to bid you goodbye.

Give my love to mother. Tell Phill to write. Mr. Taylor says he would like to hear from him.

Not signed

Fort Worth, Va., April 30, 1863

Dear Father,

I received your kind and fatherly letter Wednesday. I must stop for the drum has beaten for roll call, so goodnight.

Friday morning--

The sun rose in a cloud of fog. When it clears away it will be warm. The grass has grown so that it is good feeding.

It is May Day. How many queens will be seated on their thrones and crowned with wreaths of flowers? There will not be many around unless they be young colored women.

Gen. Tyler has been ordered to join Hooker. He is to have command of the reserve heavy artillery of the Army of the Potomac. Is leaving today.

His command has been split up. We are now under command of Col. Wells of the 34th Mass. Col. Wells is Col. Wessells' senior as Col. Wells' commission is dated three days earlier.

We are not in the same brigade with the 1st Ct. Artillery.

Col. Wessells health is slowly improving. He is in command of the regiment.

Yesterday we were mustered for pay, etc. It being a fast day we did not drill.

Good Osborn wanting to go fishing asked Capt. Bissell if we might go. He asked the colonel who said we could with a wink toward the creek.

We started off. Found a net and a couple of boys to work it. The proprietor had one third, the boys one third and we the same. Our share was about thirty which made us a good meal. That is the way soldiers do when they go fishing.

It is rumored that Gen. Hooker is on the move. We hear but little about him. We have cheering news from the Mississippi Valley and from the south. Everything looks brighter.

When Hooker does move he will move like a mountain avalanche, sweep everything out of his way and take Richmond. But very likely we will have some reverses before the war is over.

Last Saturday we practiced throwing shells from the Rodman guns. The shells weigh about thirty-two pounds. They are of conical shape. There is a wafer like substance put in the shell and if it was thrown only ten feet it would explode.

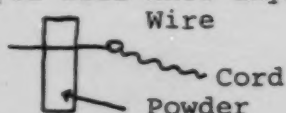
The target was a mile and a half distant, in an air line. The nearest shot was within thirty feet of the target. The shells would explode and tear a hole in the ground large enough to bury two men.

When the piece was discharged the recoil would throw it back about six feet. All we had to do was to load it, run it up to the breastwork and sight it. This is done with an instrument made for the purpose.

When the gun is fired it is not done with a hot iron but with a friction tube, as it is called. It is a little tin pipe about as large as a goose quill and about one inch in length. At one end a small hole is punched through it. This pipe is filled with powder. At the top is a small wire which runs through the hole. This wire is covered with the same substance put on matches. There is an eye in one end of the wire.

The pipe that is filled with powder is put into the vent hole of the gun. A cord with a hook is hitched into the wire and at the command "Fire" is pulled. This fires the gun.

I shall draw the shape of it for the benefit of the small folks. I do not know that you will know anymore about it now than before.



As to the little black lamb. I do not know of any name at present that will do. If you want an African name perhaps Dina will serve.

As to the colt--hope it will never be a war horse. If it does, it will not get any more care than most of the poor racks of bones we see around here. A cavalry horse has a hard time of it as it has to be out in all sorts of weather with poor forage, etc.

Yesterday some of our boys were downtown and saw about forty guerrillas pass through the city on their way to Washington. The cars run to Warrenton Junction which is about forty miles. They had a guard of about forty men to go with them.

Two more of our company have been discharged--Leonard Bradley and Jackson Tompkins. Leonard B. started for home yesterday. His wife is very sick.

Lieut. Wadhams is getting better. Told some of our boys that he soon would be back with us.

I wish very much that I could be at home to help you with the work.

There is plenty of land here but nobody to work it and there are no fences.

I must close. Give my love to all,

From your son,

Lewis

Leonard's discharge has gone to Washington. He is no better.

We can buy shad for 15 cents that weigh four pounds and very nice ones.

Has there been any suckers caught this spring?

Letter #52

Headquarters 19th C.V.
Fort Worth, Va. May 5, 1863

Dear Father,

I have received your letter of April 29th and May 1st.

The reason I did not write was because Hiram Bradley expected to go every day. I put off sending my letter until a week had passed. If I had known that he was going to remain so long in camp should have sent it long before.

I suppose you know as much or more about what is going on in Hooker's army as I do.

Lieut. Wadhams said that on Sunday night over eight hundred "Rebs" were taken up to Washington on a transport. It was loaded to the water's edge with prisoners and guards.

I must stop for the present.

Have just come from the railroad after having been as far as Burkes' Station where we loaded three trains with wood. Burkes' Station has a switch so that trains can pass.

Well! I had thought that Burkes' Station might be as large as Woodville but when I got there I found I had over estimated it. We found two houses and a log cabin. I saw but three or four whites. All the rest were darkies.

It has been a cold, lowering blustering day.

When we came in we rode on top of a baggage car. Some of the way the train went at the rate of a mile in two minutes, which I call rather fast traveling for this part of the country.

While I am writing Lieuts. Shumway and Wadhams are here playing whist. Lieut. W. has returned to camp but is not well. Does not report for duty. I hope he will before we have to move for I think him to be about the smartest officer we have.

Col. Kellogg has returned to camp. He was arrested in Ct. by order of Gen. Heintzelman. His sabre was taken from him when he arrived in Washington.

He reached camp May 1st in the afternoon about three o'clock. I was sitting in my tent polishing my musket when I heard loud and continuous cheering at the further end of the camp.

Some of the boys said they bet that old Kellogg had arrived and went to see. They found the old fellow sitting on his horse surrounded by about five hundred men, all cheering and throwing up their caps and crowding around to shake hands with him.

Perhaps you think I went out and joined them. I did not. I do not think a man or an officer should be allowed to desert his post. The only reason he left was (I am told) because he was not consulted about the men having furloughs. It was not managed to suit him; so to show his indignation he up and left without ceremony.

Since he has returned to camp he has repeatedly said that he does not know why on earth he cut such a foolish caper.

I do not know what they will do with him. He will have a trial by court-martial.

Today Gen. Stahel came to Alexandria by a special train. He is a small man. Has an eye quick as lightning. Looks as if he had some energy and dash about him. Think he has by what I read in today's paper about his attack on Mosby's cavalry. He sent some fifty of them to Washington a few days ago.

I saw Mr. Ives Saturday. He was at Falmouth until two weeks ago when he left for Fairfax Courthouse. He tells me that he and another agent have a church for their use in which they sleep, cook, and have Sunday school every Sunday. He left here by the three P.M. train so as to be there Sunday.

Thursday morning--

It is cloudy rained hard last night.

This morning I shall go to see Mary and Sam.

Last night I saw an extra edition of the Washington Star which contained cheering news from Hooker.

Stoneman has cut off the enemy's communication with Richmond. Now that it has rained very hard no doubt the streams are swollen so that the enemy will have hard work retreating. Stoneman has destroyed the bridges and cut their railroad communications, which they admit.

Prisoners continue to arrive in Washington.

Saturday morning--

Friday I saw Mary Merriman and Sam at Fort Scott which is opposite Long Bridge.

With a glass you can see what is going on in Washington and Alexandria. The fort is situated on the top of a hill which is a part of Arlington heights.

I found Mary living in a little hut not large enough to hold a half dozen women wearing hoops. Mary is the same old six pence.

I must close as I am on guard duty and it is about time for guard mounting.

Tell Phill I received a letter from him and will answer it. Myron is well.

Yours in haste,
Lewis

Letter #53

Fort Worth, Va., May 10, 1863

Dear Brother,

I received your very brotherly letter Friday last and was glad to hear from you once more. If you wrote oftener I should like it much better. But I suppose you have but little leisure this time of the year so shall have to excuse you.

There is not much going on in camp at present.

Cousin Ed Smith has just come into camp and says there is a rumor that Gen. Peck has marched into Richmond. All of the Rebs have left to join Lee.

Cousin Ed says that he has been at the very house where some of Gen. Stoneman's cavalry took two horses, one from out of a buggy within a few miles of the city.

It is reported that Hooker has recrossed the river and is on Lee's track with twenty-five thousand cavalry and mounted infantry.

The weather has been fine but it is very warm today so that summer clothing will feel comfortable.

This morning we, that is, our company and four other companies, went down to the railroad to go out for wood. We waited until nearly ten A.M. and then started for home.

Henry L. Kenny and Capt. Bissell's eldest daughter arrived in camp Friday. Kenny will leave for home Tuesday of this week.

Leonard received his discharge papers Thursday night and left for Washington Friday to settle his accounts with the government. He returned Saturday and will come home with H.L. Kenny.

G.W. Mason received a letter from his brother, Porter, who saw all the fighting of Sedgwick's division on the left. The next day he and another officer crossed over to see the battlefield. They had been there but a short time when a shell from their own battery flew over head. They put their horses at full speed for home. Ten minutes after they arrived the field where they had been was black with Rebs.

Today there is a rumor in camp that Gen. Peck has marched on Richmond.

There are but a few regiments this side of the Potomac in the forts around Washington. Around Alexandria there is now the 1st Ct. Heavy Artillery, the 19th Ct. Vol., the 3rd battalion. N.Y. Heavy Artillery, the 153rd N.Y. and two old Penn. regiments, who do

not number six hundred men in both.

I.B. Lyons is inventing a heavy gun carriage. He has a furlough to go to Washington but has to report every other day at camp. He tells me that he has nearly completed his model.

The gun carriages here are so made that it takes six men to throw a gun back from the emplacement. Lyons intends to invent a carriage which will take less men and handle the gun quicker. It is as hard to work a heavy gun as it is to dig rocks with a poor crowbar. When I can, will send you a drawing of the different gun carriages.

There are no prospects of our leaving for the front at present. We cannot unless other troops take our places.

The boys are all well, growing fat and saucy.

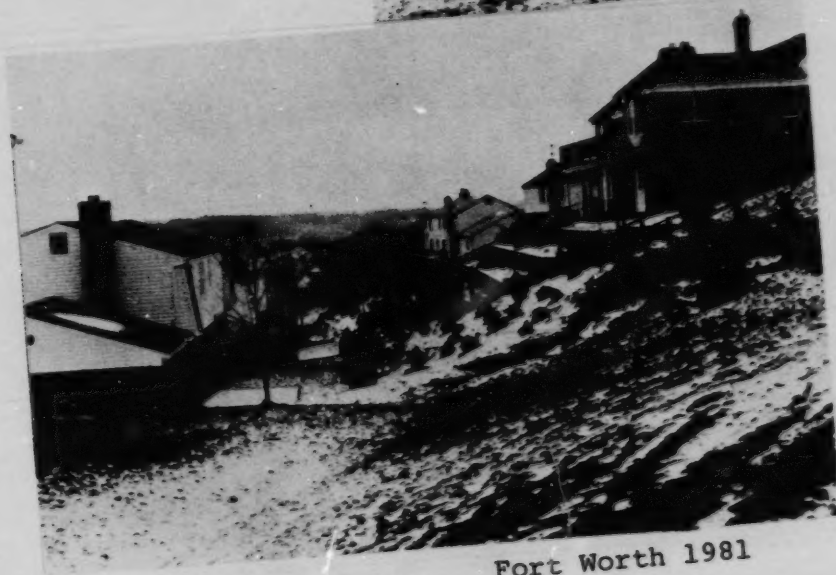
Good Osborn received a half barrel from home last week. It was filled with ham, butter, etc. All of it was of first quality. Good is as roughish as ever. Potter is as well as usual. G.W. Mason has grown fleshy. Theodore has go to be adjutant's clerk. Has his hands full of business most of the time. Myron has grown fleshy and looks better than he did at home. His large frame has filled out so that he looks handsomer, as the girls would say. Robert Watt is as stout as an ox. Albert Jones whom the surgeons refused has had the least sickness of anyone in the company. Charley Adams is at the Arlington House, Gen. Lee's house once. Sergeant Hempstead, who you may not know, is well. His mother lives in Litchfield. She is a widow lady and lives on South Street. Charles Hinsdale is getting on finely. Dwight is the same as ever. Has been sick but little. Leonard you will have among you soon. If he needs any help, I want you to help him as he is worthy of it. Do not let him suffer in any way.

Monday morning --

Nothing new has been heard this morning from the seat of war. Yesterday we did not see a paper this side of the Potomac.

It is eight months today since we were sworn into U.S. service. How quickly it has flown. Hope eight months more will see us home.

Not signed



Fort Worth 1981

CHAPTER 4 Redoubt A (later Fort Weed) near Fort Lyon
(May 17, 1863-September 29, 1863)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In order to protect the southern approaches to Alexandria, the 19th Connecticut was split up among four redoubts and Fort Ellsworth. Company A was sent to Redoubt A located on the Mount Vernon Road near Fort Lyon. The redoubt was later named Fort Weed.

In the West, General Grant began his assault on Vicksburg while Lee planned his Northern invasion which commenced June 3. There was considerable activity in the area surrounding Washington as Lee's army moved north.

On June 9th, the cavalry battle at Brandy Station took place. The next day, Lincoln publicly emphasized that Lee's army was the objective of the Union forces. In an effort to find a general who agreed with this policy, Lincoln replaced Hooker with General George Meade near the end of June.

The first days in July were the most decisive of the war. On July 1-3, the armies clashed at Gettysburg. Lee had to retreat but Meade was unable to destroy the Rebel army despite the fact that the Potomac River was swollen, cutting off Lee's escape route. On July 4th, Vicksburg surrendered to Grant, and four days later the last garrison on the Mississippi, Port Hudson, surrendered to General Banks.

As Lee was escaping in the middle of July, violent anti-draft riots were occurring in the North. The most violent one erupted in New York City. In the continuing battle to capture Charleston, an unsuccessful assault was made on Battery Wagner in which black Union soldiers played a prominent role. In August, the Federals began a bombardment of Fort Sumter and Battery Wagner.

Guerrilla activity captured considerable public attention in July and August with John Hunt Morgan's raid, Mosby's Virginia activities, and Quantrill's sacking of Lawrence, Kansas (August 21).

In September, attention shifted quickly to the West. Burnside entered Knoxville and Federal troops entered Chattanooga early in the month. However, the Union army under Rosecrans was practically destroyed by General Braxton Bragg at the Battle of Chickamauga, September 19 and 20.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. These letters cover the period Lewis Bissell's company was detailed to garrison duty at Redoubt A near Fort Lyon. For the months he was there, Bissell was somewhat isolated since maximum strength at the redoubt was two companies.

Colonel Kellogg's return to the regiment produces an interesting reaction from Bissell. Is Lewis' assumption regarding Kellogg's return valid? What may have caused the change in character Bissell observes? In September, Colonel Wessells resigns because of continued ill health. How does Lewis Bissell's opinion of Wessells compare with his view of Kellogg?

The Gettysburg campaign held great interest for Bissell and the others in his company. How would you characterize Bissell's point of view during the campaign? What were his sources of information? Does Bissell understand the "new" objective of the war and what it entails? Does he agree with it? Does he indicate any awareness of the chivalry that the Southerners in particular thought was a part of the war? Specifically, does Lewis Bissell have any romantic notions of war? Does anyone with whom he comes into contact have them? Comment on the following statement: chivalry was a casualty of the Civil War, slain by President Lincoln and his total war objective.

Conscription caused a stir in the army as well as in the North. What are Bissell's feelings about the draft? Why does he feel the way he does? How common was his type of reaction among veterans? What was the reaction to the draft during the Vietnam War? What did soldiers in Vietnam think of the draft? What are your feelings about today's registration for a possible draft?

Northern Society. The North was experiencing a large scale invasion as well as Confederate raids during the summer of 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation was in effect, black regiments were being raised, and a draft law was passed by Congress. What has been happening in the North during the year Bissell has been a soldier? Has opinion about the war changed? How has the public reacted to other wars? Have drafts ever been generally acceptable? If so, why?

The Army. While at Redoubt A, Bissell continued drill in heavy artillery tactics and participated in artillery target practice. At this point, you should consider what the role of heavy artillery was in the war. Bissell describes many of the guns, their range and destructive force. How might these guns be used in battle or in a siege? What are their limitations? How would their presence change strategy and tactics?

In a more general sense, look at the role of technology in the Civil War, and other wars as well. What new technological developments emerged from the Civil War, WWI, WWII, and Vietnam? How did military and civilian leaders deal with the new technology? Can you find examples of breakthroughs that completely changed the nature of the war? Can you find examples of breakthroughs

that were never effectively countered? What conclusions can you draw about the role of technology in war and the ways technological improvements or breakthroughs are used? Can you find differences in uses of technology between the North and South? Explain your findings based on your knowledge of Northern and Southern society.

By the end of this chapter, you should have a good picture in your mind of what camp life was like for Bissell and the others in his company and regiment. What were some of the stresses and strains of their existence? How did they deal with these problems? Did the army do anything to relieve the soldiers from the pressures and boredom they experienced?

Have you ever been in a similar position of having to put up with a monotonous routine for an extended period of time? How did you deal with the problem?

ITEMS FOR IDENTIFICATION

¼ gill of whiskey: Enough for what?
Mt. Vernon: Relatively expensive to visit, why?
Parrotts: Thunderous talk.
Napoleon Howitzer: A most popular gun, but why?
Barbette Carriage: A fancy name for a platform?
Maryland, My Maryland: If Lewis only knew the words!
Morgan's Raid: How damaging was it?
Confederate Money: How could Lewis tell if it were bogus?
Custavus A. DeRussy: His uncle fought for the South; his father had Lee's job.
Kirby Smith: A Benedict Arnold?
Quincy Adams Gilmore: He finished at the top of his class in 1849.
James Wolf Ripley: His nephew was a general for the C.S.A.
Mason and Slidell: The Union almost battle Britain over them.
J.E.B. Stuart: The "Beauty"?
Gideon Welles: A noted diarist.
William F. Barry: Why did he save Bissell?
Samuel Heintzelman: He captured an important Southern city.
General Havelock: Bissell read a book about him.
Edwin Stanton: Controversial!
John S. Mosby: The Gray Ghost.
George G. Meade: Did he have a defensive psychosis?
John Adams Dix: He fought in the Mexican War when he was 14 years old.
John Sedgwick: Would have been Lewis' corp commander.
Nathaniel Lyon: Why did they name a fort after him?
Elmer Ellsworth: How did he arouse war sentiment in the North?

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

Of all Civil War campaigns, the Gettysburg battle has held the greatest interest among historians and the general public alike. Students will find it fascinating to research the many issues and debates surrounding the battle. Practically every aspect of the battle has some controversy attached to it, from the inception of the plan for the invasion to the inability of Meade's army to pursue the retreating Confederates.

There are scores of primary sources available that introduce students to the difficult question of reliability. Edward Stackpole's They Met at Gettysburg gives a comprehensive account of the battle. The novel, The Killer Angels, by Michael Shaara, attempts to be historically accurate. Many books contain sections devoted to the battle; among the more moving are descriptions by Douglas Southall Freeman in R.E. Lee and Bruce Catton in Glory Road. Confederate controversy after the war, especially the Lee-Longstreet dispute, is explored superbly by Thomas L. Connelly in The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara

At this particular stage of the war, Bissell and his company were detailed to garrison near Fort Lyon. In his letters, Bissell shows great interest in the Battle of Gettysburg, which took place from Wednesday, July 1 to Friday, July 3, 1863. Although he was not personally involved in the combat, you can gauge his estimation of the importance of this crucial battle. What were his feelings during that period? How might he have felt, isolated on garrison duty, knowing that a major battle was under way only a few hours away? How reliable were his sources of information?

The Killer Angels, a Pulitzer Prize winning account of the Battle of Gettysburg, has elicited comparison with All Quiet on the Western Front and The Red Badge of Courage, two novels that you will study in chapters six and seven. When you come to read these two other novels, keep in mind this comparison: the novels are quite different in many ways, especially concerning narrative technique, yet all three, each written approximately fifty years apart, are undeniably among the great novels of war. You will be asked to consider which novel is the most successful and effective at evoking the feeling of violent combat.

Two questions you must ask concerning any novel you read are: Who is the narrator? What is the narrative point of view? This novel employs a third person narrative, and one of the principal narrators is the young Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, an unusually gifted and highly educated officer in the Union army. There are other points of view, too. You will observe the feelings of General Lee and Lieutenant General Longstreet on the Confederate side, as well as the reactions and thoughts of other high ranking officers on both sides during the course of the battle. The novel thus will differ from the points of view of men in the ranks who are often directly involved in hand-to-hand fighting, acting under the orders of their generals. How much is their point of view expressed?

Bissell is an ordinary soldier, and you will observe how radically different his narrative is from those of the officers in this novel. What would his point of view have been had he written a book concerning the Battle of Gettysburg? How would the values and priorities of a private or corporal differ from those of an officer? You will have to examine their differing functions and responsibilities, and ask yourself what qualities, both positive and negative, might make an officer. What kind of soldier might inevitably remain in the lower ranks?

The kind of battle portrayed in The Killer Angels is bloody and dangerous. In some situations, such as Pickett's charge, a soldier's chances of being killed or wounded might be as high as 8 in 10--an eighty percent casualty rate. You should also reflect on the fact that even seemingly minor wounds were frequently mortal, owing to the primitive medical care. Involving yourself in this kind of combat could be seen as a form of suicide. Why do men nonetheless follow the orders of their commanders, despite the very distinct possibility of a painful death? Is it courage, or

obedience to responsibility and duty? You might ask how you would react under similar circumstances. A question frequently asked of conscientious objectors by draft boards in Britain during World War I was how you would react if you saw a German soldier attacking your mother or sister. Is this a fair question? Do you think you would be a conscientious objector, or would you enlist voluntarily in the armed forces in the event of war? If you did serve in the forces, would you rather be an officer or a member of the lower ranks? You should recognize that losses among commissioned officers can frequently be higher than among the ranks. Do many high ranking officers die at Gettysburg?

All soldiers have to be prepared to take the lives of others. Why is it that the vast majority of men would never consider murder in ordinary circumstances, yet are prepared to kill others as innocent as themselves in the circumstances of battle? You should realize that the situation of "kill or be killed"--self-defense--is in fact relatively rare, especially in modern warfare. The point of view of officers is especially interesting: they are not only directly involved in killing of the enemy but must also be prepared to sacrifice their own men. The higher ranking the officer, the more he has to regard his own men as chess pieces, important only in their strengths, and expendable when the situation demands it. Is it a contradiction that many of the officers presented in this novel are devout Christians? Bissell, an ordinary soldier, is a religious individual. Do you think he will be prepared to kill when the need arises? Would he have any regrets? Do the officers in The Killer Angels have any moral reservations about the carnage they must cause?

Which officers have a rather romanticized view of the battle? Find examples of this; which appear to be chivalric in their attitudes, regarding battle as somehow glorious, and seeing officers as an elite of select individuals who must guide the actions of their men? Is there anything glorious about battle? Can warfare, (like death, to paraphrase Peter Pan) be "a great big adventure"?

In this novel, you should become aware of the important role of technology. Good communications, the telegraph and the railway, and effective weaponry all contribute to the winning of the battle. Where is this made clear? You should note that Bissell is intrigued by heavy artillery, and devotes much of his writing to description of guns, their range and destructive force. Does Shaara illustrate the effects of artillery? You should show specific examples.

Your written assignment for this chapter will be to write a paper concerning the values, attitudes, and opinions of Colonel Chamberlain, General Lee, or General Longstreet. You must consider the duties and responsibilities of an officer, and you should illustrate priorities and moral concerns.

Chapter 4 Redoubt A (later Fort Weed) near Fort Lyon
(May 17, 1863-September 29, 1863)

Letter #54

Fort Lyons, Va., May 17, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter of May 5 I received Friday, the 15th. It was sometime on the road. Usually they come through in two days.

The week has been an unusually busy one to me. Tuesday night I went to bed; about 1:30 A.M. Lieut. Wadhams came to our tent and told us to fall in as soon as possible with our blankets slung over our shoulders. We did as ordered. He took Dwight Stone and left.

We and companies C and D under command of Capt. Bissell started for Fort Lyons. We found Dwight at Fort Lyons and the lieutenant beyond the fort. We were marched past the fort to redoubts.

Here we found barracks to stay in. We went to bed once more and when we awoke saw the sun rising over the hills of Maryland.

When we were able to look around found we were in a small fort called a redoubt. It mounts twelve guns. Six of them are Parrotts, which carry a ball weighing thirty pounds, two twenty-four pound Rodmans, two Napoleon howitzers, and two old fashioned guns mounted on what we call barbette carriages. These are hard to work as it takes much strength to move them back and forth.

The redoubt is built on higher ground and protects the weak parts of the fort which are lower than the ground beyond. For the rest you will have to look in your dictionary.

There are barracks here for two companies. They are built partly underground and form the rear wall of the redoubt. They are built of logs set upright in the ground and have port holes to shoot through. The roof is made of dirt and is about four feet thick. Now it is green with grass.

There is little prospect of our leaving here soon, as it will take all the troops that have been left to protect Washington. If the Rebs should make an attack here, we would have our hands full.

Yesterday Capt. Bissell, Henrietta, and Lieut. Wadhams went to Mount Vernon, which is about six miles from here. They heard heavy firing from the direction of Fredericksburg.

There have been no papers this side of the river for two days so we do not know what has been going on.

I should have written before this but have had so much work to do. Friday I came off guard and had not got my musket cleaned before the captain wanted me to clean a room in a house nearby for Mrs. Gates and Henrietta. I worked hard all day at house cleaning.

The house had been used as headquarters by Gen. Heintzelman and as a hospital for eight months. Col. Wessells will make it his headquarters. It is in a pleasant location overlooking the Potomac and Alexandria. With a glass one can see Washington.

I am out from the fort some little ways sitting on a large chestnut log. About as far as from your house to Mr. Carter's is

the residence of a brother of the Mason of Mason and Slidell notoriety. I have not seen him but G.W.M. went there one day to see him. An old negro told him that "Massa" was at dinner. He told him his business was not very pressing and that he would call some other time.

Gen Tyler was transferred from this department to that of the Potomac. He is in command of all the reserve heavy artillery and has I am told a large command.

We have to drill once in heavy artillery and once in infantry. If we are not made heavy artillery we can act as such if ever are called upon.

Last week, Tuesday night, it was reported that the "Rebs" under Stuart were within our lines and that several dressed like Virginia farmers had the countersign and had tried to cross the Long Bridge. Continual mistrusting gave the alarm. Ever since the planks on all of the bridges are taken up every night. This is a fact.

While I am writing the 3rd Battalion of heavy artillery are singing. They are all "Dutchman." Officers and men can speak but little English. The music sounds very pleasant but we cannot understand a single word of it. It is like so many black birds chattering.

The "Dutchmen" drink a good deal of lager beer. Our men are not allowed in the fort so they do not get any beer. This they do not like. The officers go and get all they want, which of course, makes the men mad.

The weather has been very warm for a few days but yesterday it turned cold. One or two nights the men slept out of doors but tonight they will take to their bunks.

Col. Kellogg is still under arrest. I think he will never again draw his sword in command of the 19th. He is now waiting for his trial by court-martial. At present he is at Fort Ellsworth. I understand he feels uncomfortable and regrets his rash acts. Some think he will get clear with the help of Secretary Welles who married his sister.

As Mount Vernon is but six or seven miles from here shall visit it at an early day if possible.

Geo. Bradley's health is poor. He is troubled with the rheumatism and is the only man from our company in the hospital.

We have fourteen men on detached duty. We cannot turn out over forty men for drill besides those that are on guard and on other duty.

Tell mother to write if possible now that she has a hired girl.

It is time for me to close. Give my love to mother and grandpa's folks.

I remain as ever your dutiful son,
Lewis Bissell

Dear Sister Neil:

As you got Pa to write a letter for you to me I shall take great pleasure in answering it. I guess you will have to get him or someone else to read it as I sometimes have to write in a hurry. Perhaps you think we have plenty of leisure time down here but that is not so. We have to drill, look after our clothes, and keep them clean. Some of us have to go out on the cars for wood. There is something to do every day so we are idle very little.

I must stop for the night for the drum has beaten for roll call.
Monday morning --

It is a pleasant morning. The sun is shining brightly and the birds are singing.

I have just finished my breakfast. Bought a pint of milk for five cents. Part of it was water.

I cannot think of much more to write of interest to you as there is little to be seen or heard around here.

So goodbye from your loving brother "Away down in Dixie"
Lewis

Dear Amelia,

As you and Neil have been so kind to think of me and write me a letter, I must try and answer.

We are having very pleasant weather just now. The grass is as high as when Pa hoes the corn the second time.

I do not see many little girls around here. Some come from the city almost every day to sell oranges, apples, and pies. Sometimes I buy of them but not very often. Oranges can be bought as cheap as apples.

Some of the little girls and boys are very poor and have to get their living the best way they can.

Tell mother I have been cleaning house for Col. Wessells all of one day after having been up all of the night before.

We have some cannons here that you can put your head into. A small dog can crawl in, turn around and come out.

In the country there are but few people. They left their homes when the war broke out. They could not stay because the army took all they had to live on and used their houses for hospitals.

I see Mr. Minor almost every day. His health is better than it was last fall. He has not been able to talk loud all winter. However, a few days ago he suddenly regained his voice. He is well and healthy.

I see your last school teacher, Mr. Taylor, every day. He cooks for the officers.

I do not know of much that is worth writing about. Give my respects to Dick Johnson and sisters.

From your brother,
Lewis

Monday Morning --

Father,

I have just finished writing to the little girls and will write to you.

We are situated so that we cannot go to the chapel. It is two miles distant. The nearest church is in the city.

You will receive by the hand of Leonard my State order. When you get the money on it send me, if you please, \$4.

Cousin Kate Lyons left for home the day that we moved (Tuesday). Ed Coe is still in Alexandria. Whiting Smith has been detained in the hospital in the city on account of his age.

There is little prospect of our leaving here as all the troops have been sent to the front.

I have written the latter part of this letter on a table. Most of my letters have been written on my knee, a poor place for writing.

Tell Sam that if he wants me to write to him he must write to me.

Letter #55

Fort Lyon, Va., May 19, 1863

Dear Father,

Yours and Phill's letters came to hand last Monday.

I am on guard and it is now about 10 P.M. o'clock. The rest of the guards are sleeping.

Seth Whiting is corporal of the guard and has just loaded his musket. Says that he will get rid of one more cartridge tomorrow morning. Here we have to load our muskets and when we go off guard shoot at a target.

The weather for a few days back has been cool and comfortable. Last night it was cold enough for a frost. Do not know that we had one.

While I am writing the rats are running around under our feet as kittens would at play.

The grass is rather backward, so the old farmers tell me. They say that there will be a small fruit crop this summer. Peas are up six inches, so Corp. Cables says. There is but little done on this side of the Potomac. All groceries used in Alexandria have to cross the Potomac.

Mr. Lyons has just come from Washington and brought with him the latest paper. The news from Gen. Grant is cheering. If it is true Vicksburg must soon fall into our hands.

There is no news from the Army of the Potomac, only that the spring campaign is ended. I hope the contrary is true, that is, it has just been opened.

The death of Gen. Stonewall Jackson is a great loss to the Rebs. I cannot help admiring the man for his true courage although he was a rebel.

He was shot accidentally at night by his own men.

Lyons has got his invention into the patent office and is now waiting for the patent. This afternoon he said he showed it to a general with three stars on his shoulder straps. The general had a bald head, was cross-eyed, and very fleshy. I told him that it was Gen. Ben Butler. Lyons said he had seen his picture but could not tell who he was. The general examined it and said it was ahead of anything he had seen in the shape of a gun carriage. At some future date, I shall send you a drawing of it.

Lyons saw a negro regiment marching through the city for drill and exercise. They marched by platoons and made some very good wheels.

The field and staff officers were white men. The line officers were colored. They all marched right up to the handle. They had a Marine Band of forty instruments to make music.

The darkies here are very fond of music.

About six hundred have enlisted in Alexandria. They will raise a brigade in Washington, Baltimore, and Alexandria.

There is a rumor in the papers that the Penn. Militia will take the place of the troops around Washington and let them go to the front. If so, they will need a little drilling before they can man these forts to advantage.

Col. Wessells' health is much better than I ever expected it would be last fall when he was first taken sick.

You wished to know about Mr. Wm. Smith. Since he came out he has been promoted from a private to a corporal. He is very well liked by all of the company and officers. If Miss Sprague ever changes her name to Smith, it will not be for the worse. And as far as the corporal is concerned for the best, that is, if the war ever ends and he returns home safely.

As for Phill, poor fellow, he is all alone and must do something to keep up the excitement. As most or all of the girls are off teaching school, you must indulge him some. I guess he will not do anything out of the way.

I have not heard from Aunt Julia in a long time. Wonder if she is so busy making cheese that she has no time to write. If so, I must excuse her.

What has become of Bill Emmons? Has he vanished suddenly or become speechless like John Bishop? Is he driving his \$200 oxen still? When next you see him, give him my best respects, with a bow, and tell him I am growing as the boys say, fat and saucy.

It is about 11:00 P.M. and I must close. I am in good health as usual. Do not know what the warm weather will do to me.

Cousin Ed Smith was here a short time tonight. He is as well as ever.

Give my love to mother and all the family.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis

Letter #56

Near Fort Lyon, May 26, 1863

Dear Father,

I have not received a letter from home this week but shall write to let you know that I am still in the land of the living, both alive and well.

There is no prospect of our leaving here as there are not enough troops around Washington to defend it well.

Yesterday the paymaster arrived and handed us two months' pay, which we did not refuse to take.

In the afternoon, Brig. Gen. Barry, chief of artillery in the Department of Washington, inspected the forts. Today Maj. Gen. Heintzelman made us a visit, so the boys tell me. I was away on the cars loading wood, so I did not see the generals.

A new fort called Fort Hooker is being built. It is partly finished, enough so that guns can be mounted. The guns passed by here tonight. There is now or soon will be in forts Ellsworth, Lyon, Hooker, and redoubts A, B, and C about one hundred and ten guns, all under Col. Wessells' command with about twelve hundred men to man them.

Sunday night there was an alarm. Gen. Stuart's cavalry were reported scouting around here. Monday night all the negroes in Alexandria were picked up by the patrol and put to work digging rifle pits to protect the city. All spare troops in Washington were sent down with several batteries of light artillery.

Gen. Heintzelman told Col. W. that if there was any prospect of an attack he would give him three hours' notice. The colonel told the general that he wanted only three minutes notice and that every man would be at his post.

It is reported that Gen. Hooker has crossed the Rappahannock below

Fredericksburg and that the Rebs had crossed above with their right wing. So rumor says. There is nothing in the papers about it.

Good news has been received from Grant. Hope we soon will hear of the capture of Vicksburg.

Today Sergeants Hempstead and Hatch and Russell Curtis (the man that helped Lawrence fix his barn last spring) went down to Mount Vernon. Everything looked lovely down there, they said. They met some men on horseback who began to question Sergeant Hempstead rather closely. The sergeant smelt a rat. When they started back these men mounted their horses and rode on ahead. They turned off on to another road and stood looking at them. They later saw them with others going through the woods. The boys arrived in camp safely. If the men had attempted to take them prisoners, they would have found them ready.

We have to double our guard every night. If anyone approaches we challenge three times. If no answer is given we fire.

Sunday night one of the Dutchmen saw a lantern going through the bushes. "Who come dar" he challenged. No one answered so the Dutchmen let drive. Then a nigger who carried the lantern sung out, "It's me massa. Don't shoot."

We have to drill in heavy artillery most of the time. Today Lieut. W. said he would drill us in light artillery.

Last week Tuesday Willard Parmelee's wife and two children arrived in camp. Willard went to Washington to meet them but he missed them. She arrived in camp in the afternoon. He returned in the evening very much disappointed but he was greatly delighted to find his better half safe and sound.

The worst of it was he had no place for her to stay except with the men in the barracks. The woman who lives in the back part of the colonel's house took pity on her. So at present she is staying with this woman.

If you have seen her you very likely recall what a lovely delicate looking specimen of humanity she is.

The boys are all well and in good health. None in the quarters are sick. Geo. Bradley is the only one in the hospital. We have but one in the company unable to do duty. We have forty men for duty, two cooks, two teamsters, two musicians, two men at division headquarters, one in the hospital, two in Alexandria, one here acting as ordinance sergeant, making in all twelve men that have been detailed out and do not do duty in the company. Then there are thirteen non-commissioned officers who make up the rest of the company. There are not over six hundred men in the regiment able for duty.

If this reaches you before you have mailed money to me, please do not do so as now I do not need it. Just as sure as I send for money the paymaster comes around. It happened so the last time and has this time.

Col. Wessells' health is very good for him. He is in command most of the time. Now and then he feels a little unwell.

Peddlers have brought lettuce here to sell. The heads are quite large and look very nice. I have seen potatoes high enough to hoe. New potatoes will be along in four or five weeks.

Myron has got a pass and will go to Mount Vernon today. Two passes are allowed each day.

I do not know that I can write anything more of interest, so shall close. Give my love to mother and accept these poorly written lines from

Your son,
Lewis

Letter #57

Fort Lyon, May 31, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter of May 19th I received Friday the 29th. It found me well and enjoying myself to the best advantage.

We have been having some very warm weather. Have had no rain here in two weeks. I hope you have plenty. I do not care if they never have any in the South if it will starve them out.

We have to be very watchful at night. The guard is doubled and the guns sighted on the most important places.

I should have answered your letter before but I have been very busy. Friday I went after wood and yesterday forenoon went again. I got back in time for dinner and had just got it down when Col. W. sent for seven men with picks and spades. We got four axes from the engineering department. We followed the colonel and the engineer over three miles around the woods. Finally we struck a path which was traveled some.

The engineer told us to chop trees and brush to obstruct the road. This we did. Some of the trees were the nicest white oak you ever saw. They were two feet through at the butt. If you had them they would be worth \$10 apiece.

We felled trees every few rods across the road.

I became very sweaty and blistered my hands in chopping.

Yesterday, Mrs. Mason arrived all safe and sound. Mr. M. went to Washington to meet her.

Yesterday very much to the surprise of all Col. Kellogg made his appearance wearing his sword and sash. He is the same old fellow. He went around to all the redoubts but ours. Last night the boys cheered him lustily. The reason he did not come here was because he did not want any unnecessary noise around headquarters. He came today when all the boys were in their quarters. The first they knew was that the colonel was in the fort.

We were glad to see him back but I should have liked to have seen justice done to him. His sister married Secretary Welles and through his influence Kellogg was re-instated.

Some of the boys are willing to pay him the homage due an emperor if he would but smile at them. Some of the officers feel the same. As for me, I cannot respect him or overlook his conduct as a soldier. Some place a great deal of confidence in him, but I do not. If he will leave his post of duty and "skee-dadle" he will do so again. He is a smart, thorough, energetic and efficient officer. If he had a good moral character and would sign the temperance pledge, I would not ask for a better officer.

There was an order read at dress parade tonight that all approaches leading toward Alexandria and Washington be fixed so that they could be obstructed on short notice, and that all by-paths be blocked.

Rumor says the Rebs are making preparations for a large cavalry

raid into Pennsylvania or Maryland or perhaps Alexandria and if possible get into Washington. If they come this way they will find a warm reception awaiting them.

Mr. Richards is the only minister who has preached to the regiment since Mr. Wainwright left.

The library has been placed in the guard room where all can have free access to it. I have read nearly all of the books in it. I have no catalog of them but will get one and send it to you. I will name some of the books: The Dairyman's Daughter, Pilgrims Progress, The Rocked, No Pains--No Gains, Prairie Flower Boy, Gen. Havelock, Hedley Vicars, etc. I cannot think of anymore just now. They are all good books. A good many of the men have read them while on guard to help pass away the time if nothing more.

Col. Wessells left for home today at 4P.M. to be sworn into office and transact his business. He will make a short stay this time.

There is no prospect of leaving so if you feel so disposed you might send me some butter, cheese, dried beef and vinegar packed in dried apples. Those articles are the most useful to me.

John Bishop received a box from home on Friday. It came through in three days.

I can keep butter here as well as you if not better even in the hottest weather.

Wilson Potter has charge of the magazine. It is very cool being underground.

The drum has beaten for roll call so I must close and bid you goodbye. Give my love to all. You must excuse bad writing as I have a lame wrist. Goodnight.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. I shall send you the \$4.00 you sent me and will send you more soon. I will get the Confederate money you wrote for. Sent for it but did not get it.

Letter #58

Fort Lyon, June 7, 1863 2 P.M.

Dear Father,

Your letter of June 2nd reached me on the 4th inst. It was duly read and now I will do (as Capt. Peck says) my very prettiest to answer it.

The past week has been a rather busy one with us. We have sent fourteen men down to the city to work hewing timber to make a stockade around the government property so if there should happen to be a rebel raid they could not destroy that part of the city which is used by the government.

The weather has been hot and dry. The grass has grown but little. Corn, the little I have seen is very backward for this time of the year and place. From what I have seen I judge this is not much of grass country. I do not know what it was years ago but imagine that in Washington's time it was richer than now.

Col. Wessells arrived here last night and assumed command this noon.

This afternoon at 4 P.M. there is to be a regimental inspection, review and dress parade all in one. As I have not felt very well for two days have been off duty. Today I am much better and shall

go on duty tomorrow so I shall escape being thumbed over by Col. K. who is to be in command.

Within the last three weeks we have been favored by the presence of four generals and a drove of engineer officers. All seemed pleased with our appearance. Capt. Bissell says we are soon to be examined to see if we will do for heavy artillery.

The new chaplain arrived Saturday. I have not seen him. Some of the boys say that he will hold service at 5 P.M. I hope he will be a more energetic and faithful man than Mr. Wainwright.

Adjutant Demming has not arrived yet. His furlough expired yesterday, so Theodore says.

On Tuesday and Friday of last week we practiced target firing. Friday the firing was poor from the rifled guns. The shots were of a poor pattern and went end over end. We shot two rounds from a smooth bore gun cast in 1826.

We fired at a mark, half a mile away. The first shot struck within twenty yards of the target, the next within two feet of it, then glanced and struck in a hollow, glanced again and struck in a meadow, went over a house, came down, went through a picket fence, hit a half cord of wood and knocked it into all manner of shapes, next struck an oak log as large as the crown of your hat and split it through the middle. Where it struck next I have not learned. In all it traveled over a mile and one quarter.

The Dutchmen in Fort Lyon shot a shell at a target and when it was a few rods beyond a house it exploded scattering fragments all around the country but none were hurt.

5 P.M. --

The regiment is now being reviewed and inspected. Col. Kellogg is in his element. I guess he will find some fault with the men and officers.

There is not much worth writing about nor anything interesting that I can think of.

Mr. Miron Filley and Mrs. Benjamin Filley arrived Friday afternoon. Mrs. F. will stay sometime but Mr. F. will leave for home early this week. Mr. B. Filley has procured a tent for Mrs. F.'s accommodation.

We have quite a small company of ladies. Among them is Mrs. Iffland, Mrs. Sergt. Parks, Mrs. Corp. Mason, Mrs. Parmelee, Miss Bissell, Mrs. Corp. Dunham of Co. H. beside those at Co. C and Cos. E and H.

How many there are I do not know. Sometimes they come to see dress parade. With hoops on they would form a line longer than the largest company.

7 P.M. --

Dress parade is over. Col. K. officiated. After he had shaken hands with the officers his orderly said he had not sworn once during the day. How long his good nature will last is more than he or anyone else knows.

A daguerrian has pitched his tent near here and I made him a call for your special benefit. Don't you think you could make Mr. Judd a call for me sometime? These pictures are a little better than the average taken here which at best are very poor compared with those

you can get at home.

At dress parade tonight our new chaplain offered prayer. This is the first prayer uttered before the regiment since Mr. Richards was here last spring. After this, I hope we shall have religious services.

John Bishop has just come in and says that there will be a religious service at the colonels. I must close.

Enclosed you will find four images of myself or pictures or whatever you may call them.

Give my love to mother and all concerned in my welfare. Write as often as you can. Please excuse all mistakes. Your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #59

Near Fort Lyon, June 17, 1863

Dear Father,

Yours and Philips letters that I had been looking for arrived by today's mail. I had made up my mind to write today whether or not I received a letter from home.

I am well and so is the most of the company. Tom Beach does not feel very well but is not sick. Fred Jennings is off duty--hot weather is at the bottom of it.

It is so hot that the men when drilling sweat their shirts through and are as wet as though dipped in a mud puddle.

Tuesday the ninth of June at about two o'clock in the afternoon Tom Beach and I were going to Redoubt D to work on fatigue. We were about half way there when we heard a popping of shells. They sounded like fire crackers only a great deal louder.

The next second came a stunning crash. Immediately shells were flying over our heads and all around us. We sought the protection of stumps and logs which were near by.

As soon as the shells stopped yelling around our ears we started back for camp. On the way we found sticks and stones which had been thrown as far as from your house to Mr. Carter's.

When we reached our fort we learned that the explosion had occurred in Fort Lyon. The cause, I afterwards learned, was due to the carelessness of a lieutenant.

Twenty-six men and a lieutenant were detailed to remove the powder from some shells. The powder had become damp and caked.

The men were furnished with wooden spoons with which to remove the powder. As the work did not proceed as fast as the lieutenant desired, he sent one of the men for some priming wires. (These are used to prick the cartridge after it is rammed down). These priming wires were used to loosen the powder in the shells.

It is supposed that some of the powder was ignited and exploded the shell and as there was loose powder lying around and shells with their plugs out they caught. This explosion blew in the magazine door and the whole magazine went up.

There were about eight tons of powder besides several thousand rounds of fixed ammunition in the magazine.

Our redoubt was the nearest to the fort--about as far as from your house to Mr. Kilbourn's.

Myron was on guard on top of our magazine at the time. Fragments of timbers flew over his head within thirty feet of him.

Col. Wessell's house is eight or ten rods nearer than our barracks. Nearly every glass in the house was smashed.

Theodore was in the house writing at the adjutant's desk. Glass flew all around him. He thought a shell had exploded in the room and made for the door. The door swung against him and hurt his back so that he raised blood. Col. Kellogg sent him to the hospital. We saw nothing of him for over a week when one morning he came back to us well as ever.

Most of our men were in their quarters at the time so were unhurt.

When I reached the fort (which was covered by dirt and timbers) I found most of our company there.

The first thing I noticed was that every tent had been knocked into a cocked hat. The ordinance sergeants tent had been within fifty feet of the magazine door. The sergeant had just sat down to dinner with his wife and child. When the first explosion came, he threw his wife and child on the floor and himself on top. A shell passed through the tent and tore off one side of his hat close to his head. When I got there he was digging his wife out of the ruins. As they were all right, I went on to where the magazine had been.

Here there was a hole as large as your barn cellar. Around it lay the mangled bodies of men. One, the first I saw, lay with a hole as large as your fist in the top of his head. His body was cut and mangled, his legs were broken and nearly torn off, both arms were gone and the skin nearly all torn away from what remained.

Another was without a head. Later, it was found outside the fort and farther than from your house to the brook. Both his legs were gone.

Another was found down by Hunting Creek bridge a distance of half a mile. His body was picked up in four pieces.

Still another was found outside the fort alive but badly wounded.

The lieutenant was so badly mangled that the only way he could be identified was by part of his shoulder strap which was about all of his clothing left.

Out of twenty-six, twenty-two were killed outright. One of the men with whom I happened to have some acquaintance was one of those to escape unhurt. He had just gone to his quarters for a chew of tobacco when the explosion occurred.

In addition to the twenty-two killed fourteen were wounded. Three of these died the next day.

Just before sundown I went to their hospital and saw the rest of the bodies. One was so badly wounded that his entrails came out. Another had the left side of his head blown away. The brains came out leaving a hollow space. Another had his hip torn off by canister. He was mangled and riddled like a sieve.

The next day Brig. Gen. Barry, chief of artillery, came to inspect the ruins. After him came Maj. Gen. Heintzelman and about two P.M. "Uncle Sam's hired man" Abe Lincoln came with one of his right-hand men--Sec. Stanton also Gen. Slough.

I was there on guard at the time and was walking my beat but I had a good view of him as he passed close by me.

The guard at the gate had orders to stop all citizens so if it had not been for Gen. Slough, Abe would have been stopped.

He rode in a carriage among army wagons and was in our midst before we knew it. He got out and walked around just as if he was at

home. He came across an axe that lay on a log--picked it up and shows the boys how he used to swing it.

He is very tall and slim--stoops a little, has a very keen, quick, and shrewd look about his eyes.

The presidential party stayed for about an hour and then started for the White House.

About 4 P.M. the funeral procession formed at the gate. The ambulances, seventeen in number, each with two coffins, were followed by the officers and men. They marched to mournful music played by First Conn. Artillery band which Col. Wessells sent. It was a sad sight to see the procession move towards the Soldiers Graveyard in Alexandria.

Since then things have been very much as usual.

I must bring this letter to an end and begin on one to Phill.

I have heard that Aunt Liddy Bissell is dead and buried. Capt. Peck received a letter from his wife telling the sad news. I hope it is not true.

I must close. Give my best respects to all that ask about me and tell them I am as well as ever and have not grown poor since I left home. Accept the few lines from your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #60

June 21, 1863

Dear Father,

When you and Phill received my letter, I guess you wondered what had become of part of your letter. Today in looking over the papers in my portfolio I found, much to my surprise, part of my last letter to you. Will send it by tomorrow's mail.

It is now about 1 P.M. All day we have heard heavy cannonading from the direction of Bull Run. It sounds like distant thunder except when first heard has a full clear sound which gradually dies away into a low rumble.

Col. Wessells' mounted orderly says that he knows it is cannon but perhaps it is not.

There is a man staying in our company who formerly was from Harwington, Ct. For the last seven years he has been living in Va. His home is about twenty-two miles from here.

He was in the battle of Bull Run and was taken by the Rebs, but as he was sick they sent him back.

Since then he has been employed by the government as a scout.

When Mosby made his last raid he came upon this man's house and tried to take him. As Mosby's men went in one door this man came out by another. He fled for his life for if caught he will be hung.

The cannonading grows louder and heavier.

Yours in haste,

Lewis Bissell

June 22--

Last night the trains ran all night bringing in wounded. So the mounted orderly says.

P.S. If you send a box to Myron or me will you put in two or three bottles of Dr. Cooper's Balm?

Dear Mother,

You do not write as often as I wish you would but I suppose you

are as busy as ever. However, I shall write you a letter now and then.

As for my health it is as good as ever and I think I can stand about as much hardship as any man in the company.

I have plenty of clothes--more than I shall want if we should have to march. But I do not see how they can take us away from here unless they bring in troops to take our places. Someone has to be here so it might as well be us as some others.

I suppose you will see Mrs. Geo. W. Mason and that she will tell you all that she knows about me.

Geo. Moran, Gusty's husband, was here Sunday and told me that Mrs. Sam was going home this week. I wanted to see her but cannot as there has been an order from Washington which forbids men or officers leaving their posts. So now no passes are granted to men or officers. Moran got a leave of absence from his captain but Capt. B. will not grant them to us.

I see that Wilson Potter's relatives are a little worried about his health. That is all foolishness as he is as healthy as I am. He was not very well after he came back from his furlough but after we left Fort Worth his cough left him and now he is as robust and well as any man in the company.

How does Grandpa Wright and Uncle get along this summer? Does Aunt have as poor health as usual?

I received a letter from cousin Mary Ferris saying that cousin Ellen had been unwell but was better now and received visits from friends and relatives.

Mary did not explain further so I shall have to ask you for details as she said you and Pa were at their house.

How is Mrs. Osborn getting along this summer? I do not hear anything about her.

I suppose Grandma Bissell is flying around the same as usual worrying and fretting when things do not go right.

As I have written nearly all the news to Pa and Phill, shall not be able to write you any so perhaps you will find this a poor letter but I hope it is better than none.

Please accept these poorly written lines from your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #61

Near Fort Lyon, (July) 3, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter and Phill's arrived Tuesday but I did not get them until Wednesday as I was on picket some two miles from camp.

Instead of going to the front the front has come to us. There are no pickets between us and the Gulf of Mexico except our own.

When Hooker's army left Fairfax Court House the pickets were removed all along this line of defense. Now we have to do our own picketing which is rather dangerous work.

We do not have to drill now as we have enough to do without that. We have to get up every night at three and go to the guns. We lie down under the tarpaulins that cover the guns and have another nap until morning. At sunrise we answer to roll call and then turn into our quarters for another nap. We need all the sleep we can get.

We have a company of cavalry here called Scotts Nine Hundred. They have been in Washington ever since the war broke out. Part of them form the president's bodyguard. They are mounted on splendid

horses which are kept well. The captain is a Connecticut man. Some of the men have lived in Litchfield County.

They go out scouting. Last Sunday they brought in five suspicious looking men. Two were mounted on horses branded C.S. One man had on a rebel uniform.

By yesterday's paper I saw that the Rebs are getting themselves into a hornet's nest up in Pennsylvania and that Gen. Meade had had a battle and driven Lee. They were falling back from Harrisburg at last accounts.

Lee has boasted that he would eat dinner on the Fourth of July in his mansion on Arlington Heights. I hope he will be a prisoner and eat dinner elsewhere.

It looks as if we might catch some of Lee's army before he gets back.

Of one thing we all are certain, that is, it is the best thing that could have happened. To have the war transferred from Virginia to Maryland and Pennsylvania will frighten the North a little and make them turn out and help.

We feel confident that most of Lee's army will be trapped.

Nothing surprised us more than the removal of Hooker and the appointment of Meade. It made us feel down-hearted for a day or two but he has gone on and done well so far. Don't know how he will hold out.

If the President will remove the Secretary of War and put Ben Butler in his place, turn Halleck out of doors and put in Fremont we think things would go a little better.

I received a letter from Uncle Erastus dated June 17. He says the Democrats there have behaved very much like the Democrats in Conn. He thinks it was the best thing to have happen for voting showed who was loyal and who was not. I suppose you hear from him.

The chaplain has been unwell most of the time and has kept himself at the hospital. Last Sunday he held a prayer meeting in one of our bomb-proofs.

He is a much better chaplain than Mr. W. The regiment is so scattered that he is away from here most of the time. He preached a fortnight ago last Sunday. He seems to be active and wide awake. Everywhere he goes he distributed tracts and papers.

I am informed by today's paper that the 19th C.V. and two batteries were taken prisoners.

The news is very encouraging and if we have any luck we will bag most of Lee's army.

Corp. Cables received a letter from Will at Whithouse, Va., twenty-one miles from Richmond. Hope they will just walk in and invade as Lee has done in Pennsylvania except when they get in Richmond stay there.

There is not much news around here to write about.

As to Phill's standing on guard at Mr. Osborns think he would get along very well until it came time for the grand rounds then he might forget to challenge or forget the countersign. I think from eight to eleven is pretty long for him to stand without being relieved.

As to Ed Pond's drinking. I am very sorry to say that he indulges pretty freely and can swear a little more fashionably than Col. K. I do not want to tell tales out of school but it is true whether Mrs. Pond believes it or not.

Col. K. has left off swearing. We had a battalion drill a few weeks ago and he never uttered a single oath. He is not so hard with the men as he was before he went home.

Not signed

Letter #62

Near Fort Lyon, (July 3), 1863

Dear Brother Phill:

I suppose you have laid your plans for the celebration of the Fourth of July; have got a horse and carriage and pretty, blushing, rosy cheeked, damsel of fair eighteen to keep you company.

We should liked very much to have finished this war and been home before this to help.

I don't know whether or not they will allow us to fire a national salute but hope they will permit us to let the Parrots talk. However, I shall celebrate the Fourth on guard.

I saw cousin Ed last week. He very much wants to go to the front. The flies are thicker than wool on a sheep. They torment me so much I can hardly write.

I shall have to stop for awhile.

7 P.M. --

There is a telegraph battery in Fort Lyon. The operator has received news that Vicksburg with its garrison has surrendered and that Gen. Meade has had another battle and taken nine hundred prisoners.

There will be no salutes fired from the fortifications around Washington. The reason is because of rebel scouts who would be enabled to find out the number of guns and the positions of the forts.

Everything looks very much brighter than it did last year at this time. Perhaps the war will be ended before next winter. I think it will if we do not have any more defeats or failures.

They are going to send seven men home to recruit for the regiment. Hiram Spencer goes from Company A. He leaves for home on Monday the 5th.

We have here a company of cavalry so there is represented in the brigade every arm of the service.

The other day I heard a mowing machine rattling. The farmers near Mount Vernon have not been troubled by the army except the Rebs.

Three miles from here there are good farms under cultivation with plenty of fruit trees, etc.

Milk can be had for ten cents a quart. I have to get a pint almost every day.

We are having rather hot weather. Corn is from waist high down to first hoeing. Corn can be planted here as late as the first of July and do well at that.

Think it would do for Mr. Carter and Bill Emmons to live here. Bill could holler as loud as he pleased and none would disturb him. There is plenty of room with neighbors few and far between. The only thing he would miss would be the alders and Sam Dudley.

There is plenty of timber here--some grand old forests.

A few days ago I came across our target and found in a tree (two feet through at the butt) a thirty pound shell buried right in the middle of the trunk about eight feet from the ground. The tree was about a mile and three quarters from the fort.

I must close for the night.

July 4--evening--

This morning when I awoke it was raining but it soon cleared up and before noon the sun came out hot.

The nation's birthday was not announced with roar of cannon or ringing of bells. Not a gun was heard until noon when a national salute was fired from Fort Washington down opposite Mount Vernon and another at the navy yard in Alexandria. Tonight rockets and fireworks are shooting across the sky.

The greatest news of the day is that Meade has Lee prisoner with Hill and Longstreet. The two latter are wounded, the rebel army demoralized and retreating toward Richmond. Also that Meade has sent a large force to head them off.

That is the Fourth of July rumor. I tell the boys it will do for a Fourth of July story.

I have spent the day on guard. Paid ten cents for a pie for a Fourth of July dinner which also included salt pork, potatoes, coffee and bread.

Sunday morning--

The Fourth passed very quietly. It is drizzling. We are all waiting very impatiently for the papers to bring us the news of the capture of Longstreet and Hill. Col. W. had a telegraph dispatch from Arlington that...

(remainder missing)

Letter #63

Near Fort Lyon, July (4), 1863

Dear Sister,

As you have been so kind as to write me a letter it is with pleasure I take my pen in hand to write you.

I do not know that you can read writing and if I had time I would print so you could read it yourself. But a soldier's time is not his own so he must do the best he can and so it is with me.

Many times I have had to leave my letter for a day or two to go on duty.

We are having very busy times. We have to be up every fourth night. The rebel cavalry have been within three miles of here.

Some two miles from here there are cherries and mulberries. I have had all I cared to eat and can have more if I go after them.

Mrs. Sanford arrived here Wednesday of the present week. There are seven women in our company at present.

There are plenty of blackberries near here. Since the country has been run over by soldiers the weeds and briars have grown in abundance.

Wilson Potter picked a quart of wortelberries yesterday. They are not very plentiful here.

How are you going to spend the Fourth of July? I shall spend it on guard. There is to be a celebration in Alexandria. What it will be I have not learned.

I must close.

Eben Oakes is a brother of Minerva Morse.

Accept these few lines from your soldier brother,
Lewis

Father,

In regard to Will Watrous, Frank Bunnell, Curt Wedge and Lyman Smith being in the guard house. It is true.

The way it happened was this. One morning Corp. Cable and the above named men, and I, were sent to work at Redoubt D. When we arrived the other companies were not there.

The above named refused to work until the others arrived but the corporal was of a notion to go to work.

When the boys refused he told them if they did not go to work he would report them to the captain on return to camp.

They went off and returned about 10 o'clock. When the other companies arrived, they went to work and worked until noon.

We told the corporal that he had better let it pass by but instead of doing so, he reported them to the captain.

Nearly all of the company were down on the corporal for it.

They were brought before the major and had their trial and were sentenced to ten days of hard labor.

They were not drunk at the time anymore than you or I. I do not think they had had a single drop of whiskey in a week. If you have heard a story that they were drunk it is untrue--every word of it.

Monday morning--

Last night it commenced raining and has rained hard all of the time.

Hope the Potomac will overflow its banks.

As the mail is about to start, I must close.

The barrel has not arrived. You wrote that it was directed to Myron. You did not state whether the company and regiment was on it. If not they should be.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis

Letter #64

Near Fort Lyon, Va., July 12, 1863

Dear Father,

Your's and mother's letters arrived on Sunday.

They were welcome visitors but I am very sorry that my letter had not reached you. There was a time when the letters were few and far between. It was about the time the rebels made a raid near the Baltimore and Washington R.R.

For the last three weeks we have been very busy. So much so that we did not have time to attend to our own war.

We have to go on picket every third day. The corporals once in four days. Our picket lines are about three miles out. They run from the Potomac in a semi-circle around to Fort Worth.

We are now having a very quiet time. The Rebs cavalry has been called away up into Pennsylvania to help take care of our cavalry.

The news from Meade is very good. The rebels pontoons have been destroyed and their last hope has about vanished. Another battle is expected soon at or near Williamsport.

For the past three days troops have been coming up the river. Geo. Stone was in Washington Friday and while there three New York regiments arrived from Fortress Monroe. They told him that the army under Dix numbered from fifty to seventy-five thousand and that most of them would come up the river. About twenty thousand have gone up the river.

Five large steamers loaded almost to the water's edge went past yesterday. They have been ordered to Frederick City, Md.

It seems to be the intention of the government to capture or annihilate Lee's army.

The fall of Vicksburg was a stunning blow to the rebels. Gen. Grant has immortalized his name and shown himself to be about the smartest general in the United States.

The weather has been cloudy most of the time. Yesterday afternoon a heavy thunder shower came up and finally settled into a steady rain.

The brooks have overflowed their banks so that they are impassable. If it rains hard in Pennsylvania and Maryland the Potomac will remain impassable for some time to come.

It seems as if the God of Battles had favored us this time. How long he will do so we do not know but hope until the end of this rebellion.

I should not wonder but that the 8th C.V., would come up and travel over their old battle grounds once more.

The health of the company is very good. Some of the men have been troubled with diarrhea. Chas. Merriman met with an accident. He was cutting beef when his axe slipped and cut his knee open. He was taken to the hospital. The doctors thought at first that he would have a stiff knee but now say he will get well without losing the use of his knee.

I suppose you have heard before this how near we came to being in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Cols. Wessells and Kellogg say that it is known that we are soon to be turned into heavy artillery. That is one reason why recruiting officers have been sent here.

I suppose you will see Hiram Spencer once in a while. Since he has been in the army he has been a good soldier. He has worried some about his affairs at home.

Yesterday cousin Ed Smith came here and stayed a few minutes. He looks well and healthy.

Our boys are at work building a new magazine in Fort Lyon to replace the one blown up. It will be completed soon. By the time we get things fixed up we will have to leave.

The Alexandrians have a story going around that we are going to N. Carolina before long. Where the story originated I am unable to learn.

We are treading the same old track just like a horse on a race course. We get up at quarter of four and drill until six then we do not drill again until half past three then at seven comes dress parade. That is all the drilling we have to do. The morning drill is heavy artillery, the afternoon, infantry. That with guard and picket duty is about all we want to do this time of the year.

I have seen corn as high as your head and some just large enough to hoe the second time. Corn can be planted here as late as the middle of June and do well.

The seasons are longer and farmers do not have to jump quite as fast as in the New England States where the seasons are shorter.

Winter wheat has been harvested and stacked.

The half barrel arrived a week ago today all safe. The butter was not hurt, the pickles leaked a little but not enough to hurt anything.

When next you send a box or barrel direct it as you would a letter only have it come to Alexandria instead of Washington. If you direct my letters to Alexandria instead of Washington, I shall get them one day earlier.

Please thank Mrs. Osborn and Grandpa Bissell for the things they sent and tell Neal and Amelia for the singing book.

The rain has come down plentifully. The creek rose so high it could not be crossed and the tide set up which cut off our supply of bread until late in the afternoon.

One of our ambulance drivers tried to cross the bridge. He had a negro another man and some groceries. He got part way when the king bolt broke and he got across with the fore wheels. The body of the ambulance with the negro went down stream and lodged. The negro and the ambulance were pulled out and the other chap swam ashore.

If the Potomac is as high above Lee as the creeks have here, Lee will have to wait a long time to get across.

In regard to the chaplain, he has returned from the hospital. I have heard him preach once and attended a prayer meeting in his tent a week ago last Sunday. He was to have had one last night but it rained and of course no one came.

I like his appearance much better than I did Mr. Wainwright's. He has a little more life and goes around among the men more than Mr. W. ever thought of doing. He goes to the hospital and Fort Ellsworth almost every day.

I have forgotten his name but think he preached in Norfolk or Barkhamsted.

The way we came to have him was through the Quartermaster who is a Christian man.

Col. Kellogg likes him much better than Mr. W. because he is more of a man and is willing to do something and look after the men and attend to his business.

The regiment is so scattered that he cannot preach to them all on the same Sunday. I have forgotten the chaplain's name but will send it to you some other time.

Henrietta Bissell and Mrs. Gates left for home on Saturday the 11th by way of Fortress Monroe. They will have a pleasant time if they get home before the rain but think they will catch some of it.

Myron is well as usual.

The ladies in camp have pretty warm weather to visit in but soldier's wives will have to make the best of it and not complain.

Andrew Brooker's wife is here. I have not made her acquaintance yet but they tell me she is smart.

If everything goes well, I hope we will be home by next Christmas. We will be the last to leave for home. The regiments that have seen the hardest fighting will go first.

As Mr. Cables is writing to you I will send this by him. Tell mother that I shall answer her letter in a few days and as soon as I can find any news to write about.

Give my best respects to all who ask about me and love to the grandparents.

Yours most affectionately,
Lewis

July 15, 1863

Dear Mother,

As I have a little leisure time shall commence a letter to you. It may not be as good an answer to you as yours was to me.

I am as well as usual. If I am sick you will hear of it.

Sometimes when you are looking for a letter from me I am looking for one to answer. Sometimes I write a letter and mail it and the return mail brings one. If I had delayed I could have answered it so I sometimes put off writing longer than I ought.

I suppose that you heard the Glorious News from Port Hudson, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and last but not least, Charleston.

While we rejoice over the victories we must remember that there are thousands who cannot rejoice with us.

We came within one of being in the battle of Gettysburg. Gen. Barry saved us. The Secretary of War had us down as one of the regiments to reenforce the Army of the Potomac and to be assigned to the 12th Army Corps which suffered severely. But we were kept behind for it was thought we were needed here.

I suppose the draft will take place up in old Connecticut. Wonder if there will be any riots or resistance will stick out. We have heard that they have had riots in Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, and in other parts of the state.

We are enjoying ourselves to the best of our ability.

Franklin Bunnell has gone to the hospital. He is troubled with a breaking out on his body. The doctor says it is caused by eating too much salt meat and too much hot weather.

Most of the company have it more or less. It will itch like fire and scratching becomes part of the manual.

We eat all the berries and fruit that we can lay our hands on. New potatoes have come into market. Early apples are just beginning to ripen, pears also. Onions are large enough to eat. All kinds of garden vegetables are to be had.

The morning news from the Army of the Potomac is not so good as we wished. I should think that when a general wishes to carry out his plans for driving the army of Lee into the angry waters of the Potomac he ought to be allowed to do so. But no--these generals are afraid that their commanders will get too much honor fame and smiles of a thankful people lavished upon them. So they just frustrate all his plans for success. This is the way Meade has just been dealt with by some of his generals.

It seems as if the Rebellion had been brought down on its knees and will soon have to surrender. When peace is here then will come the great political question, shall slavery be allowed in the U.S.? Some papers have already begun to agitate the matter. But enough of this.

My shirts are somewhat worn but no holes have come in them nor has a stitch ripped or a button come off.

My boots have stepped off the stage of action. I shall wear army shoes for they are much cooler than boots in this hot place.

July 16--

I shall now try and finish my letter.

The news from the army indicates that Lee has been allowed to

escape across the Potomac. Now I suppose there will be some tall marching done by both armies to see which will reach Richmond first.

Everything around here goes on very much the same except we have had a visit from the paymaster. He paid us up to the first of July.

As soon as the mails are safe for sending money I shall send some home.

Some of the men in the regiment did not get a cent. They had sutler's bills that took all their wages. All they had drawn in clothing over \$48, was taken out of wages. There is one chap in Co. C. who is twenty-five cents behind. I have not drawn my full amount of clothing by some three or four dollars.

You wanted to know if I wore woolen stockings. I wear them on wet days. I got two pair of cotton stockings which cost me 30 cents a pair. I do not wear stockings except when on duty and when away from camp.

The chaplain had a meeting in the captain's quarters Tuesday night but as I was on guard and on my post at the time did not have the privilege of attending.

The chaplain's name is Winthrop Phelps. He was chosen upon the recommendation of the Q.M. secretary. He seems to be quite a worker, is on the go somewhere most of the time.

Now about the barrel. Everything arrived. Did you send me some towels? If so, I have not received them. Myron says that when he unpacked the barrel the towels he found were marked for Theodore Vaill. I found by the list that they were directed to me by mistake.

The butter was hurt but little on the road. The cheese is all right. Tell grandpa that the best judge of cheese in the company pronounced it good, first rate. The beef is par excellence. Tell Mr. Osborn my best respects and tell him that I am able to do my duty with the smartest man in the company.

Geo. Bradley is now doing duty as a safe guard at a house a mile and a half from here. He says they used to have twenty slaves but when the war broke out all but one family left. They now say that if they offered to come back they would not have them. Now they have three hired men who do more work than six niggers would, let them be the best to be had.

Slavery is done away with in this part of Virginia. There are a few families who stick up for their slaves and who call themselves F. F. Va. or the first families of Virginia. What few there are left are poorly off for the army has robbed them of all their property.

Friday morning--

The news is that Corp. Geo. W. Mason is going home to escort the drafted men to the regiment.

Capt. Bissell is in command of the regiment, Col. Kellogg and Major Smith are on a court-martial. Capt. Bissell has made a detail of ten men and officers to go home and fetch down the drafted men. Capt. Williams of Co. H., Lieut. Potter of Co. D., Lieut. Coe of Co. K., Sergt. Munger of Co. C and some others I do not know.

We can have all the blackberries we want by going about a half mile from here. The pie boys are bringing green apple pies for sale. If they did not taste so strong of money we would like them much better.

I must close. Accept this letter from your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Dear Father,

As it is Sunday evening and very hot and as I am not very busy will answer two letters that I received by Friday's mail, one of July 18th the other of June 20. The latter has been over a month on the road. I think it is the first letter that has been delayed for any length of time.

I suppose the reason was Gen. Lee's invasion of Penn. Well. Lee has left and is now traveling south to the tune of "Oh! Carry me back to old Virginia's shore." He must turn now and then and cast long and wistful looks upon "Maryland My Maryland."

There is but little news of Meade's army. They are after Lee in among the mountains. It is rather hard to guess what Lee's plans for the future are.

The chaplain held services in the colonel's house this morning at ten. It was so hot one could take but little comfort. I was sleepy and once or twice took after you. As soon as it was over, I laid down in my bunk and had a nap.

You seem to think that you have rats at home. Well, I thought so but since I have been down here find that those at home are but a drop in the bucket.

I can tell you some rat stories if you wish any.

One night when on guard and while walking my beat, I heard quite a loud noise in the captain's quarters. The next morning, I asked the captain if he was putting the rats through the battalion drill.

He said that after he had gone to bed they woke him up by taking the liberty of running over him. He ordered them to leave but they disobeyed. Then he got up both of the lieutenants and Eb Oakes and went at them.

The same night when off my beat I sat writing at the table when Mr. Rat made his appearance upon the table and took hold of my candle. I finished his exploits with my bayonet.

I see by your letter that Prince is still alive and, I suppose, is the same savage old dog.

The Dutchmen in Fort Lyon have quite a drove of little whelps who keep up a continual barking a long time after honest dogs ought to be in bed.

Good Osborn sends his best respects and wants to know how you came to know so much about Parson Williams' family affairs.

I think that if the small folks were here I could put them in a place where their noise would soon "dry up" as the boys say.

Monday morning 7 A.M.--

I suppose that you and mother are hurrying Phill and the hired "gal" and that you are also after Sam and Frank. Mother is hurrying around after the breakfast dishes and water is to be brought up from the brook for washing.

I suppose that before this reaches you, you will have heard of Capt. Bissell's resignation.

Last night at dress parade Capt. Peck's resignation was read, much to the pleasure of Co. K. They want him to go home as soon as he can get there.

Capt. Bissell took us by surprise but Capt. Peck did not.

Now two men captain's will be made. They will be Lieuts. Wadhams and Spencer of Co. C. He is from Wolcottville. Lieut. Shumway is to be promoted to 1st Lieutenant of Co. B., so we will have two new officers and if Col. Kellogg has his way we will have three.

He wants to shift the captains, have Capt. Hubbard of Co. B. (who is now the ranking captain) go to Co. A. and Lieut. Wadhams to be captain of Co. K. The captains are pretty much opposed to it. We are in hopes we will keep Lieut. W.

Last night Lieuts. Wadhams and Demming played a trick on Capt. Peck. They found out that the captain had two gallons of whiskey. They got Col. Kellogg to invite Capt. Peck up to his tent to have a little something to drink, so up comes the captain.

The lieutenants slip into the captain's back door, get the captain's whiskey and cut for the colonel's on the double quick and get there before the captain does.

When the captain arrives he finds a crowd of brother officers to drink with.

When the whiskey is all gone Capt. Peck sends down for his and finds it gone. The captain then smells a rat.

I suppose you will see them home before next week.

Some think that Col. Wessells will resign and go home before long. We are going to have a change in officers soon.

Ed Pond has not been promoted to a sergeant. Loveridge of Co. H. has been promoted to a first lieutenant in the Third Colored Regt. U.S. and has reported for duty.

The paper and envelopes were a little greased by the dried beef but not enough to hurt it badly.

When we heard of the riots in New York we wished very much to take some of our light guns and go up there and help put them down. I do not think we would have fired blank cartridges but would have used canister shot and (as the boys say) made guts fly about the streets. I think that after a few rounds they would not find it appetizing business.

It seems that the invasion of Penn. by Lee and of Ohio by Morgan and the riots in New York were all part of a contrived plan. But I think that they will find they have the wrong pig by the ear this time.

Lieut. Wadhams has promised me a pass this week and then I will get some Confederate money and send it in my next. I will send a bill in this that a soldier gave me last winter. Whether it is genuine or bogus, I do not know.

But it is nearly time for the mail carrier to come for the letters so shall have to close and write a few lines to Corneal.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Tell Alice that I will answer her letter as soon as I can find time and news to write about.

Dear Sister Neal,

Your letter I will now try to answer.

I am as well as ever and suppose you are.

We are having very hot weather and it makes us northerners sweat some.

There are a great many blackberries here. You could pick a milk pail full in an hour and a half. Some of the bushes grow so high that a man needs to be on horseback to reach to the top of some of the bushes. The berries are the largest I ever saw. They are as large as a man's thumb and no bragging.

I should like very much to hear that lecture but there is but little use of wishing.

Last week Dwight Kilborn's uncle from Ohio who has been here to see Dwight gave us an account of what he saw at Vicksburg, Murfreesboro, and Gettysburg. He had a pass from Gen. Burnside in his own handwriting.

He saw the battle ground of Gettysburg just after the army left it for Hagerstown. He saw some rebels who were covered with a blanket and few stones to keep the wind from blowing it off.

He went to Baltimore and saw Gen. Skenk with whom he is well acquainted. The general read him a paper giving an official account of the dead and the wounded found on the field and the number of prisoners that had been turned over to him.

I have a lame wrist and think you may have to get someone to read this for you.

Theodore Vaill keeps his face clean shaved except his upper lip which wears a mustache.

Myron is on picket and is well.

I received a letter from Will Cables written at Portsmouth, Va.

I am about out of news and it is hard to find anything worth writing about in these dull times so shall have to close.

Give my love to mother, Neal, and the rest of the family.

From your brother,
Lewis

Letter #67

Near Fort Lyon, July 30, 1863

Dear Mother,

Your long motherly letter reached me on Monday and it is useless for me to tell you that it was read with pleasure. Of all the letters I receive yours and Pa's are the most welcome and are read with the most interest.

I am as well and tough as ever I was at home.

Perhaps the little folks have good reason to wonder why you should have a letter directed to you. I suppose they thought something new had happened. Well, if directing them to you will fetch me long letters I shall do so after this.

Since I wrote last I have heard that the draft has taken place. Some of our boys have received a printed list giving the names. Among the names I noted some I hoped would come.

Mr. Lyon arrived here tonight direct from home. He says that most of those drafted will come if they can get into the 19th but if they cannot will pay their three hundred dollars and stay at home.

Lyon says that his patented gun carriage is on the road to Washington. There, in a short time, it will be put to the test to see whether or not it will work. I suppose that if he is successful, his fortune is made.

This morning Mrs. Bishop, Mrs. N. Barber, and Mrs. Ed Perkins left for Washington to first look around and leave on the 6 P.M. train for home.

This afternoon Mrs. Theodore Sanford and Mrs. Corporal Scoville, escorted by Capt. E.O. Peck and Sergt. D.C. Kilbourn (who has got a furlough for twenty days) left and will join in Washington those that left this morning.

Capt. Bissell has just returned from a visit to the Army of the Potomac at Warrenton and Rappahannock Bridge. He went clear out to our picket lines. The rebel picket lines were on one side of the river and our pickets on the other side. They were so near they could talk with each other and did.

The rebels had a battery planted so as to command the crossing but last night an effort was to be made to dislodge them.

The timber for the bridge was there. It could be put up in half a day so that cars could run across it. The bridge is about 800 feet long.

The captain said that he stood in one place for an hour and twenty minutes and saw our cavalry pass by in files of four and when he left they were still coming out of the woods a mile distant.

He saw the 5th and 20th C.V. They were in the 12th Corps. He saw Gen. Sedgewick's corps but did not see him.

The country is running to waste. There are no houses--only the chimneys are left. There was but one house at Manassas Gap and that was one used by Beauregard as his headquarters.

Well, I have written enough about this. The captain can tell you all about it when he gets home.

Night before last I was on guard and slept but two hours. Last night at about half past ten six of us were called up to guard one hundred deserters that had been sent here to work on the fortifications. All the sleep I had in forty-eight hours was about seven hours.

July 31--

I slept sounder than a log last night. Did not hear the drum this morning.

The deserters arrived here at about half past ten at night. Some of them had uniforms but most of them were dressed in citizens clothes. A few had blankets but most of them were without and had to lie down on the ground without them. Some were without boots or shoes and others had only a pair of pants and a shirt.

About three o'clock in the morning it began to rain very hard. Tom Beach and I had laid down to sleep. We had a rubber blanket over us and one under us. We lay still and let it rain but the poor deserters had to take it as it came.

In the afternoon they were taken to Fort Lyon. The Lieut. Col. of the 3rd N.Y. battalion is going to clothe them and set them at work in the fort.

By yesterday's mail we heard that two companies of regulars had been sent to Bridgeport and if (as the N.Y. Herald says) the people wish to resist the draft they can have a draft of Uncle Sam's pills.

When the names of the drafted men were read there was a roar of laughter when a copperhead's name was given. Some that we most wanted to come have escaped. I wish that Ed Seymour had to come. We would very much like to make him train right up to the mark and show him all the beautiful science of military life.

Friday evening--

This evening Dr. Gates arrived from the hospital near the battle ground of Gettysburg. He is looking poorly and is about worn out. Says he shall stay here a day or two and then join his regiment out

at Warrington.

Tonight a long train came in. Some of our boys looked through a glass and said that the cars were filled with men. Most of them were lying down sitting. We think from what Capt. Bissell saw and said that there has been another fight but we don't know.

I have a new doctor in place of Dr. Lawton. His name is Allen. He was born in New Milford and has been living in New Haven. He was in the peninsular campaign. So he has been heard to say. I do not know anything more about him as he has been here but a few days.

Tonight at dress parade Adjutant Demmings' resignation was read. We have lost the best officer for adjutant that there was in the regiment. Who will follow I do not know but some say that Capt. Sperry of Co. I will go soon.

I have no objection to some of the officers resigning for there are smarter men to take their places and fill them much better.

We are all well and getting along as usual.

Myron and I have a little butter left, one whole cheese, part of a piece of dried beef, and some dried apples. Butter is thought the most of by the men that have had boxes sent. Next comes cheese and pickles.

Pickles at this time of the year serve a double purpose. After they have been eaten the vinegar can be used with cucumbers. I buy cucumbers, cut them up and put them in the vinegar.

The pickles you sent are very sharp. Cucumbers cost two cents a piece, tomatoes one cent.

I am near the end of my paper and must close and write to cousin Mary Ferris.

Please write as soon as you can and I will try to write a better answer than this.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis B.

Letter #68

Near Fort Lyon, August 1, 1863

Dear Sister Alice,

I have put off writing you or rather answering your letter long enough.

I am on guard today so shall have time to write you.

The day is the hottest we have had. There is hardly a breath of air stirring. The sun sends down its fiery rays without mercy.

There is nothing new to write about. There seldom is in a garrison. It is the same thing over and over again each day and week.

I received a letter from cousin Mary Ferris last Friday. She said grandpa and grandma were there.

Our lady friends have pretty much left us--only three remain, Mrs. Isaac Sanford, Mrs. Parks, and Mrs. Brooker. They will stay as long as we stay here. How long that will be I do not pretend to know.

I suppose Miss Sprague makes the scholars stand around. How do you like her? From what I hear she is a pretty smart teacher and has an eye for all mischief making, etc.

Apples and new potatoes are abundant. Some two or three miles from here cucumbers are sold for two cents apiece, tomatoes a cent apiece. All kinds of vegetables fetch a high price in the Alexandria market because not enough is raised to supply the city. A great deal

is shipped from Baltimore.

Dr. Gates, son-in-law of Col. Wessells, is here. He has just come from the battlefield of Gettysburg and says that he has seen with his own eyes over three thousand dead men besides many thousands wounded.

He says that the stench that rises from the litters of the army, dead horses, and bodies of men, buried but a few inches underground, is horrible and sickening.

The thermometer has been as high as 102 degrees in the shade. If that is not hot enough then I for one don't know how much hotter it ought to be to make it comfortable.

There is no preaching here this forenoon. It has been so warm that the men would rather stay at home and keep cool.

Sunday evening--

At dress parade Lieut. Shumway's promotion was read. He is assigned to Co. B.

We have but one commissioned officer left and it is doubtful if he will be permitted to stay with us a great while.

The chaplain held a meeting this afternoon in the colonel's house.

Will you tell mother that at the first chance she can get to send me two pocket handkerchiefs. Those I fetched with me are about worn out and will be gone before long. I need a towel also.

By Mrs. Bishop I sent home a pair of stockings and some yarn.

Fred Jennings is not very well. I cannot learn what is the matter with him. He says he has no appetite.

I must close. I have not written as much news as you did.

Give my best respects to all the girls in the neighborhood.

I remain as ever your brother,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #69

Near Fort Lyon, August 8, 1863

Dear Father,

Perhaps you are looking for a letter from me. Well, I have put off writing in hopes of getting a letter from home but as none have arrived will commence one.

The news from this vicinity is not new or exciting. We are treading the same old track day after day.

There has been considerable excitement among the captains since Capt. Bissell resigned. The cause of it is that the ranking captain must be on the right, the next on the left. Col. Kellogg wanted to change the captains around from one company to another. Have Capt. Hubbard of Co. B. be captain of Co. A. and so on.

The captains would not agree to this so they are going to change the companies in the line.

Co. B. is to take our place and Co. C. to take Co. B's place and we to take the place of Co. I as our captain will be the ninth ranking captain.

Co. D will be color company.

All this ceremony will come off tomorrow as there is to be grand inspection in the afternoon. I shall be on guard and so escape it.

The boys are troubled with a breaking out on their ankles and bodies that lays them up. I do not know whether it is the itch or something else.

The skin will feel hot and feverish. The more it is scratched the more it wants it. Finally little festers come out and matterate. If you prick them they grow larger, swell up and make you lame so that it will hurt to stand up very long.

Frank Bunnell was the first they came out on. He has been in the hospital about three weeks.

I think it is something in the blood. I have used Atwood's Jaundice Bitters. Have taken three bottles at 40 cents a bottle and small at that.

Thus far I have escaped.

There are not more than thirty men for duty in our company so such tough fellows as myself have harder duty. We have to take the best of care of ourselves and not get sick.

Our rations have not been as good as they were last winter. Then we could cook some in our tents but now we are in bomb-proofs and have no stoves to cook on, except the company stove.

Garden vegetables are very high here for but little is raised. Most of them are shipped from Baltimore. New potatoes are from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per bushel and more if we are a mind to pay for them.

Capt. Bissell is still here. When he will leave for home, I do not know. He is waiting to see how Lyon's patent gun carriage will work. He is interested in it to the amount of \$200 or more.

Corp. Hinsdale was in the city on Friday the 6th and saw a part of the Eleventh Army Corps embarking for Fortress Monroe. Among them was the 17th Conn. Vols. There were about 150 of them.

Their colors were pretty well riddled with bullets.

Daniel S. Garrett who lived at Geo. Baldwin's and went to school to Dr. Richards carried the colors off the field, so he told Hinsdale.

John Iffland of our company saw his brother who is in the 50th N.Y. They have been out two years and their colors are all strings. There is not a strip as wide as three fingers. They have been in every battle that the Army of the Potomac has fought.

I must close for the night.

Sunday afternoon--

The weather is pretty warm, little air stirring.

I suppose you are at church or at home in bed and asleep. If you are not very tired you are at church listening to Mr. Richards preach and Mr. Hull sing. Well, I hope one can sing as well as the other can preach.

I think that if Col. Kellogg was to choose a chaplain, he would pick Mr. Richards for he has been heard to say that Mr. R. was the most sensible parson he had ever seen.

You will see some of the grease that worked through the wrapper, around the dried beef, on the way down here. I think it will be readable. If not get some one that can spell correctly to translate it to you.

Myron received a letter from William Cables by today's mail saying that they were resting themselves after their black-berrying raid up toward Richmond.

Col. Kellogg told our drummer boy that after this we are to have whiskey rations every day to keep off the fever and ague. I don't know whether it is so or not, but I do know that I will not drink mine. I have not put three swallows down my throat since I left home.

Well, I have been nearly a year in Uncle Sam's service. It is a

year the 19th since I commenced camp life. It does not seem so long a time as that, but it is.

I suppose you have seen Capt. Peck and Dwight C. Kilbourn. Dwight can tell you how I have conducted myself while I have been away from home. I think it will satisfy you.

I think I saw among those drafted from New Milford cousin Ellen's husband. I think his health, which is poor, will clear him from the draft.

I hear that Lewis Kilbourn has hired a substitute for \$300 and that he (K) is to have all the bounties the substitute is entitled to.

When the 19th left for Washington he was very patriotic but if he is going to stand the draft that way the government had better conscript all such as he right off.

We would like him down here. Would show him how to train around right up to the handle, as the boys say.

I am getting near the end of my paper and shall have to close.

Tell Phill to write me a letter one of these days.

Remember me to my grandparents, cousins, and neighbors.

I remain as ever your dutiful son,

Lewis Bissell

Co. A. 19th C.V.

Half past seven--

Corp. G.W. Mason has just arrived from New Haven with a cargo of substitutes. They came by water. He left the boat at Alexandria.

He said when they were coming down the East River two of the substitutes jumped overboard and made for the shore. Mason shot one so that he would die in less than twenty-four hours.

They are going to the 14th C.V. He represents the men as the off-scourings of New York City. He hopes that none of them will ever come here to the 19th.

He wants very much to get back here.

As it is almost mail time I must close.

Goodbye,

Not signed

Letter #70

Headquarters of 19th C.V., Near Fort
Lyon, Va., August 15, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter came to hand the 10th inst. and was a welcome guest.

I have been rather busy most of the time of late but we hope we can have a little leisure time while the hot weather continues.

The thermometer, for the past two weeks, has not been lower than ninety. Some nights it has not been lower than ninety. Hay would make in a hurry under this sun.

There has been but little rain for the past five weeks and but little cloudy weather.

At present there is not much news to write about.

Deacon Adams arrived Thursday evening. We were glad to see him. He had been to see Charley who, he says, is getting better.

Lieut. Wadhams went to see him Tuesday. The first that we heard of his being sick was Saturday. The lieutenant went at the first opportunity.

The deacon did not care to talk much about the draft. Said he

knew but little more than we did about it.

The Orange and Alexandria R.R. is running trains out every few hours. Conscripts go out on nearly every train. From where we are we can see them riding on the tops of the cars. Some of the boys who were in the city saw seven hundred of them land and board the cars.

Yesterday a regiment of Indiana volunteers from Vicksburg took the cars for Meade's army, so they told our boys.

In the opinion of military men, another battle between Meade and Lee is to come off before long. Perhaps like many other talked of battles it will not happen.

Lyon's invention has not been put to work yet. Capt. Bissell says they have received an invoice for it. The captain is waiting to see how it works before he goes home.

8 P.M.--

The evening papers say that Sumter has fallen. No official report has been received that we know of. They say that the 5th Army Corps is in the city.

There is a brigade of the regular army here. There are few of them. One regiment has but thirty fighting men in it. We can hear their bands playing martial music. Their quartermaster says that they are going north to New York. But they know no more than we do about it.

Corp. Geo. W. Mason on his return from his trip to the 14th C.V. stayed here overnight.

I suppose he has been home and has seen you before this and told you all he knows about matters and things. When he reached here he was tired out from his trip.

How long they will keep them I don't know but if all the substitutes are like those sent to the 14th C.V. I hope none will ever be sent to the 19th C.V. for we will be better off without them.

I suppose a few patriotic men like Geo. Baldwin, who are so self-sacrificing, will make all the money while substitutes are wanted then will go home with their hands in their pockets, holding on to rolls of greenbacks and wait for another draft. I wish that every man who has made it his business to procure substitutes for others could be made to come himself and (as the boys say) face the music for a while. I think they would soon get off the notion of paying three hundred dollars for every man drafted, but would say to all. "Come and help finish this war. The sooner the better."

Sunday, August 16--

I came off guard this morning and as I felt tired and sleepy did not attend service. I slept most of the forenoon.

This afternoon Myron and I have left the fort and are now near old Mason's sitting under a tree taking it easy near one of the best springs of cool water you ever saw.

Myron sends his best respects and says that we are taking things as easy as we can.

As to the lazy part, that I can do right smart, (to use a Southern phrase) for it has been so warm of late we not only feel it but are lazy as we can be and do duty.

Frank Bunnell, Henry Hotchkiss, Chas. Barber, Dave Whetmore, Norman Barber, and Joseph Bradley are the only ones from our company in the hospital.

Hotchkiss and Barber had the quinsy--but are getting better

fast. Dave Whetmore had quite an attack of billious fever. For a while he was dangerously sick but is much better.

I have reached the end of the sheet so must close.

Give my love to all the family and friends. I have sent no money home yet but shall before long.

From your dutiful son,

Lewis

Letter #71

Near Fort Lyon, Va., August 25, 1863

Dear Brother,

Yours and Pa's letter arrived safe and I will answer to the best of my ability.

The news is not very important from this part of the world or rather Virginia. Everything goes on the same as usual. Not much to write about.

We have to look on and see what the other armies are doing then talk the matter over.

Sometimes when the men get to talking about the war there will be as many opinions as there are men. Some opinions are very good but others show how ignorant the men are and what wrong impressions they have. But as the old saying is, "Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise." There is no use trying to talk anything else into them.

The haying and harvesting is over with in this part of the country until corn becomes ready to cut.

Corn grows to the height of 10 or 12 feet. Green corn is plentiful at five cents for three ears. Tomatoes are sold at the same price. New potatoes fetch from \$1.50 to \$1.90 per bushel and are very good. Milk is 10 cents a quart, butter from 30¢ to 40¢ a pound, sugar 20¢ a pound. Lemons are out of the question. Watermelons as large as a half peck measure bring 20¢, peaches three for 5¢, apples the same. Everything costs money down here.

Sunday I went to see Geo. Bradley who is a safe guard at a farm house a mile and a half from here. On the farm there are forty acres of corn. Blackbirds are numerous and do a good deal of mischief to the corn.

Also there is a large government horse pasture. The black birds pick up the grain dropped from the feeding troughs.

One day one of the herdsmen saw a flock of them light on a manger. He got an old shot gun, put in a pound of powder, a half pound of shot and made a flank movement got a good range and let drive. They picked up 223 dead black birds.

The musket was an old veteran.

The charge went one way the man and gun the other way.

Geo. Bradley has just as good a place to stay in as if he were at home, everything he wants to eat, a good bed to sleep on and not much to do. I would not ask for a better place to live in.

We have a new captain in our company and a new lieutenant also. The captain is Luman Wadhams and the lieutenant Potter of Co. D. He is our first lieutenant. We will not have a second lieutenant until the company has eighty-two men.

We do not see as many officers as we did last spring.

We have to drill one hour in the morning in heavy artillery and one hour in the afternoon from four to five. We have to dig every third day. They keep us at work strengthening the breast works.

There are over four miles of forts, batteries, and rifle pits. With these well manned all the armed men in the Confederacy could not take the line. We can mount over one hundred guns that would knock Fort Sumter into a cocked hat at two miles. There are some eight inch sea coast howitzers with bores large enough for you to put your head in.

Suppose after you have finished haying you will have a little leisure time and will have your photograph taken and send it to me and to the rest of the family that may wish one.

Some of our men have received letters from home stating that the news papers reported that the 1st Artillery and the 19th C.V. were under marching orders and would go to Charleston.

We have received no such orders but have been ordered to garrison a new fort, Fort Williams. It is garrisoned by companies F and I. So you can see we are becoming more firmly rooted here.

Most of the regiment would like to go to Charleston to see the bombardment or take part in it.

Lyons ought to have his gun carriage done and ready for service before an attack on Charleston. It could be used on the two hundred pounders. It will be given a trial sometime this week.

There is a good deal of science in the artillery tactics, as much or more as in infantry.

Cavalry, I don't know anything about. We had for a while some sixty of Scott's "Nine hundred." They were frequently off foraging and keeping the farmers a worrying for fear they would help themselves.

It is about time for me to go to bed so shall say goodbye to this letter.

Wednesday, August 26--

Last night it commenced raining. It began to grow cold this morning. Just before sunrise the thermometer had fallen from eighty-six to fifty. We think this quite a change in temperature in so short a space of time.

Lyons is going to try his invention today. Col. Wessells is going to Washington to see it.

I suppose you are hurrying the haying on the double quick.

You wish to know what our rations are. They are fat pork, bacon, bread, beans, rice (which we do not use) coffee, fresh meat, (tough as white leather) pickles, just enough for a taste, sugar and salt.

I have lived for a year on government rations and am beginning to tire of them. At this time of the year, the most sickly season, we have to be careful what we eat. A pint of milk at morning and night will cost 10¢. For the month \$3.

One dollar's worth of postage stamps each month and the same amount for paper will total \$5. Sundry other little things help to lighten one's pocket wonderfully. I thought before I went into the army that a soldier could save nearly all his wages, but I find it pretty hard to lay up any of it.

Theodore thumbs over Shakespeare some but since Adj. Demming left he has most all of the business to do so does not have much leisure time.

The parson, I hear, has to farm it alone this summer, as he cannot get any help.

I must close. Give my best respects to Charley and all of the folks in general.

From your affectionate brother,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #72

Near Fort Lyon, Va., August 27, 1863

Dear Father,

I have written a letter to Phill and will now answer yours.

There is not much news to write about and there has been little for some time.

The whiskey ration that I wrote about has arrived and is to be dealt out by order of the doctor. One quarter of a gill at morning and at night to each man and to be drunk on the spot.

Yesterday, they set me to guard it but before night they took it away.

All they will get down my throat you can put in your eye.

Lyons tried his gun carriage. It worked very well. His patent brake held the recoil of the gun so strongly that the gun took the whole carriage from the pivot. It was not strong enough.

Col. Kellogg went to see it work. I do not know that he has returned.

It has been rumored that Gillmore was shelling Charleston.

Kellogg says that the gun can throw a shell five miles is still in the ore. Solid shot can be thrown that far. They are very different projectiles from shells. It takes more power to throw a shell than solid shot.

For the last two days it has been quite cool and comfortable. I hope it will continue for a while.

The other day I saw Col. K. and the chaplain riding together and chatting along very agreeably. He sometimes comes out and drills the companies. He seldom swears.

The men like him and Capt. Wadhams for drillmasters much better than they do Capts. Rice or Ells. They drill the men harder than the colonel.

We are to take the place of Co. I. in line of battle. Co. B. will take our place, Co. C. will take the place of Co. B. and Co. D. will be color company.

The companies are placed in line according to the rank of their captains. The first ranking captain is on the right, the second on the left, and third is the color company. The captains and lieutenants are ranked so that when any detail is made there will be no quarreling about who shall command, etc.

We are company A. and always will be as long as we have a company organization.

There has been a few whortel berries around here but not enough to pay for picking. There are two kinds, black and red. They grow a little larger than in the north.

Early peaches have been picked. They sell three for 5¢--apples the same. Everything in vegetables is very high. We have to pay as much at the farmers as in the city. They will not sell to us unless we give them as much as they can get for it in the city.

After you have finished haying, won't you just come down and make me a visit, see the sights in Washington, the fortifications and Mount

Vernon. I think you would have a very pleasant time. I know that I should. I guess you would be paid for coming. It would not cost you much to live here with me if you could eat governemnt rations like the rest of us.

Troops are being shipped down the river. Where they come from, I don't know nor where they are going.

Three men from the 19th have commissions in a negro regiment. One is a captain and two are first lieutenants. Adj. Gen. Casey said that if they were specimens of the 19th it must be a smart regiment.

It will be a year the 17th of Sept. since we landed at Alexandria. At present there are no signs of our leaving. Think we will stay all winter if the war continues.

I suppose you have seen Geo. Mason before this.

I must close. Remember me to all the friends and neighbors. Give my love to mother and all of the family. Please excuse all mistakes as I have written in a hurry.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #73

Near Fort Lyon, September 1, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter, mother's, and the others arrived on Saturday and right glad I was to get them.

This afternoon Mr. Kilbourn, Mr. and Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Belcher arrived. Mr. K. give me the letter you sent. He took us by surprise.

Wilson had been expecting his parents.

We were all very glad to see them, especially Mr. K. I should have known him in a crowd of thirty thousand.

September 2--

Our visitors are looking around. It is comfortably cool for us but warm for them. Mr. K. has gone to the hospital. Charley Plumb arrived yesterday afternoon and went to see Wills whom he found a little more comfortable than he had been for the last two or three days. Mr. K. opened his eyes some after he had looked around. He is still very sick and his recovery doubtful.

This morning we dismounted a thirty pound Parrott gun and mounted it again in eight minutes. It is done by building up with blocks, then laying a timber from one pile to another, then draw the carriage away. After that we let it down by raising one end, taking out a block and lowering the gun and take out another block and so on until we reach the ground. We mount it the reverse way.

Mrs. Potter was pretty near tired out with her journey. However, Wilson had procured comfortable quarters near by.

Wilson is quite unwell just now with a sore throat. Myron is no better. He can walk but little at a time without becoming very tired. I cannot see that he is getting better.

Mr. K. has spoken to Capt. Wadhams but I do not know what encouragement the captain gave him. But he will do all he can to get a furlough for Myron.

I was at the hospital last Saturday and saw Willie Plumb. He was very sick. The nurse told me that he lay in a drowse most of the time. He told me he felt worn out but when he was rested would soon be around. It seemed to me that his marching days on earth were nearly over.

We have six in the hospital, namely, Chas. and Norman Barber, Curtis Wedge, Frank Bunnell, Henry Hotchkiss and Jo Bradley. He is helping in the hospital kitchen.

Norman Barber has been very sick but will get well I think. Curtis Wedge has a very sore throat but is getting along very well. Frank Bunnell is pretty bad off. He is troubled with the same complaint as Myron only much worse. On one leg he has too very bad ulcers. These have eaten in so that he can hardly move his leg. He has to go on crutches, what little he goes around. Dr. Plumb told the captain that Frank might get well in six weeks, or perhaps it might be six months.

Henry Hotchkiss I did not see so cannot tell you how he is.

As to the boys improving in appearance and conduct, I can only say that some appear more like soldiers. As to their conduct, I think that none of them are any better for being in the army. It is a hard place in which to retain good morals but still they can be preserved here as well as at home.

Last Friday Corp. Scoville of our company and myself went up to Fort Scott. We saw Sam Merriam and Geo. Moran, Gust's husband.

Sam is quite unwell. He has not done duty in a long time. He says the officers want Mary to come down and cook for them. She is coming as soon as the weather is cool.

Moran says that Gust would come too.

Sam is able to be around and take care of himself. He has the old cough that troubled him at home.

Almost every day steamers loaded with conscripts arrive at Alexandria. Nearly every train that goes out is loaded with them. They are from all parts of the eastern states and some from the western states.

When I was going up to Fort Scott I saw a train of cars decked out in great style. The locomotive was trimmed with wreaths of evergreen and flowers. Around the chimney was a row of little flags. In front was a large flag and on the front of the lantern was a piece of canvas on which was painted in large letters, "Sumter." A wreath surrounded this. Along the side of the cars were the names of the great victories and battles won by our armies.

Dwight Kilbourn arrived here on the 28th of Aug. He looks some better but is not the Dwight Kilbourn he was when we first left home.

The most common complaints among the men are billiousness, sore throats, sore legs, etc.

Now about the itch. You want to know what it is. Well, at first, little pimples come out on the legs and feet. These fester and finally scab over. These itch like the mischief after we have taken off our clothes to go to bed.

The only relief is to bathe the sores in cold water. That will stop the itching for a while. Now and then a flea will stick his bill in and make one jump.

What is the cause? I do not know, neither have I found anyone who can tell what will cure it.

Perhaps Mr. Kilbourn will find the cause and we will be benefited by his discovery.

About the first thing he said after shaking hands was, "Have you eaten many black berries while they were ripe?" I told him I had eaten all I could get hold of and wanted more.

He had in his head that we had gotten the itch while berrying,

some poisonous vines. If there were any vines to poison us we would have been poisoned long before as we have been over all the country for two or three miles around. There isn't a hollow, gully, or half acre of ground that some of us have not been in.

Now about the conscripts.

When they get out to the front it will be pretty hard for them to get away. The picket lines are so strong that it is difficult to get back.

If the conscripts were to come to our regiment, they would have a much better chance. We are so near the Potomac and Alexandria that it would be a very easy matter to get clothes and money, etc.

Almost every train that goes out to the Army of the Potomac carries conscripts. A good many thousands have been sent out and more are coming.

As for Mott Johnson, I think some boot leather used on his stern would help drive his old complaint off and let a little of the common sense that has worked from his head downward, back up to where it once belonged. I think that Humphry might as well do it for Mott or get his father-in-law to help if his short foot would reach.

I received the things you sent by Mr. K. and am very thankful for them.

The Pollo Course of Time, if an old book, is still a good one and just as good as new for me. I read it through winter before last when I went to school to Mr. Ives. But for all of that, I shall read it once more.

I do not know of much or any change in the policy of the government since the war broke out. The only change I am aware of is that the government is pushing things through with a stronger hand than formerly.

That change the "Demoes" do not like.

Lincoln stands now as he did when the rebels fired on Sumter

Wm Hull is bad off. He has a bad case of piles. Dr. White medical agent for Gov. Buckingham was here and examined him. He spoke of getting a furlough for him to go to New York for an operation.

I do not know how much Henry Hotchkiss spends but suppose some if not all his wages.

Mr. Kilbourn says that there is no chance of his getting a furlough for Myron. The doctors have examined Myron and as he is getting better will not grant him a furlough. There are so many who are worse off than he and who a furlough will do more good and more necessary.

Willie Plumb is not much better.

As Myron is not likely to get a furlough will write what to send in the next box.

I must close as I have given you more than your share of the letter. Shall have but little news to write the rest.

If I do not read wrong Mrs. Sprague sends her love to me and wants to know if I can send mine in return. Well, you may give her my very best respects and love.

I must close as I have reached the end of my paper. I have written a longer letter than I intended.

From your soldier boy,

Lewis

Tell Mother and the children that I shall answer their letters in a very few days. I should have answered them in this if there was anything of interest to write about.

Letter # 73A unedited transcript

Redoubt A near

Fort Lyon Va
Garrisoned by company a,
19 Con Vols

Sept 1st 1863

This picture is taken from the top of Col L W Wessells headquarters perhaps it will help you to form some idea of what a redoubt is close down to the bottom of the picture you will see Cap Wadhams cook tent and stables; on the right of the stables is the company cook tent and between the cook house and the redoubt is the limber wheels or you would call them the forward wheels in the redoubt

(page 2)

is a few detachments at the guns in the gate is Charley Merriman & his dog back of him is the drums and drummer and fifer and a stack of muskets; on the right of the cook tent is a breast work; by the side of the gate is one of Col Wessells mounted orderly on the left side of the gate is the centinel; back of the gate is a stockade of logs behind this the door of the magazine on top of which stands Cap Wadhams you will have to look pretty close to see him for he stands in front of the guns back of him is another centinel with his musket on his shoulder the rear wall is made of logs set up with port holes in back of this is our quarters on each side of the gate

(page 3)

there is in the Redoubt three kinds of guns a 63 pound Parrotts two old smooth bore mounted on what is called bar bett carriages and two howitzers the 5 of them parrotts are on the right of the magazine and one on the left the barbetts are on right behind the cap and the others the second on the left of the magazine the howitzers are the two left guns they are 12-pounders This side of the cook tent is a cobble brick oven in which we bake beans See on the left of the redoubt is Geo Potters tent Cap Wessells quarters are in the bomb proof clear to the west ends The redoubt faces the south (that is the way the guns point)

the pickets are out on the hills
that meet the horizon you can see part
of the road that leads to mount vernon
(page 4)

Presented to HB Bissell
by his son Lewis at redoubt
A near Fort Lyon Va near the
city of Alexandria Va
You can take this Riverius and
have him put the name and place
on the bottom

PS I will send you a pictur
of myself so you can see how
I look and allso the pictures
of the Publi's buildings of
Washington that you can give to
the Childern



Redoubt A, Near Fort Lyon, Va., forming part of the fortifications of Washington, D. C. Garrisoned by Company A, 19 Conn. Vols.
Capt. Luman Wadhams, com.

Dear Mother,

Your long neglected letter I shall now try and answer.

I am as well as usual. The boys say I am growing fat. Mr. K. says I look as healthy as any man in the company. But for all of that I may be the sickest man in the company in a few short hours.

Mr. K. thinks he will go home by water and will leave on Saturday if nothing happens.

Mrs. Potter complains of warm weather. The thermometer is up to ninety today in the shade.

I went to Mount Vernon last Saturday. An account of it I shall send home in this letter for the benefit of all. When Mr. K. gets home he can tell you more than I can write and so that you can understand it.

Mrs. Potter says that if it were not for Wilson she would go home. Wilson has had a very sore throat but is getting better slowly. Mr. Potter is buying up state orders. He gives \$9.50 for them. Those who are short of money thus have a chance to sell them at a good price. Some who have no one to draw the money for them can get all but 50¢.

I do not know much news to write about.

Wm. Plumb is about the same as he has been for the last five or six days. The doctors give but little or no hope for his recovery. It seems too bad for him to come down here to die, but it is all for the best.

Myron is getting along slowly. Since his father came he has "chercked" up considerably. Curtis Wedge has come back from the hospital but has not gone on duty.

Henry Hotchkiss is at work in the hospital washing dishes, etc. Frank Bunnell is not much better. He has two very bad ulcers on his legs one of them on the nerve. The doctor told him that a sea voyage would cure him the quickest of anything. Wm. Hull is not able to do duty and has not for over two months. Ed Pond has a sore throat and some sort of a swelling on his left fore finger so he cannot do duty. Seth Pond has been pretty well. He has a sick day once in a while but not very often. Geo. Bradley is at the same place where he has been all summer. He is troubled with rheumatism most of the time.

Col. Wessell's health is about the same as it has been all summer.

Col. Kellogg is not so rough as he was last winter. He swears but little when on duty. How much he does off duty, I do not know. He does not drink as much liquor as he did last fall. Theodore says he offered him some very good French brandy and he just tasted of it.

As you are going to send a box to Myron and me I shall give you a list of things I wish you would send me. Two bottles of Dr. Cooper's Balm. It is very good as a medicine or a linament, all the butter, cheese, etc., that Mr. K. thinks best, a little sage, a spool of white cotton thread, and what else you're of a mind to put in.

If you can send me a good apple pie I wish you would for I should like to eat one of your making once more.

(not signed)

To Frank:

My First Visit to Mount Vernon

It was on the morning of September 5, 1863 that Mr. Kilbourn, Myron, Theodore, Charley Plumb and myself started for Mount Vernon to visit the home of the Father of His Country--a place hallowed in the mind of every American soldier and loyal citizen.

The conveyance was a two horse wagon driven by a boy.

We left camp a little after 9 A.M. and passed over the same road used by Washington. The roads today are not what they were in Washington's time as they have been cut up by trains of army wagons.

After we had followed the Dumfrey's turnpike some three miles we turned off on to a by-road that was rougher than the poorest road in Litchfield. After passing through some woods we came to a lane. Following this found a gate which we opened and drove through a large pasture to another gate. This let us into another lane which ran by the side of 120 acre field of good corn.

We were then on Washington's old plantation. It is well wooded and has plenty of water.

I think we rode over two miles across lots before we came to the house.

As we approached the mansion the land showed signs of cultivation. The soil was of better quality.

Some of the fences Washington built are in good order and will last for many years.

The land, as we neared the house, rose in a gradual swell. We came from the north. The old carriage road came from the west.

When we reached the slave quarters an old negro with white wool opened the gate for us. We drove in and got out.

Here was a gate which had swung on its hinges for over sixty years but now it was locked so we had to go over a stile to get to the mansion.

I will send you a plan of the buildings and the tomb so you can form some idea of the arrangement.

The first thing we did was to go to the house and explore it.

The view of the house from the lawn is very pleasant. The house looks as if it would stand for many years to come. The sides are sanded in imitation of blocks of stone. This has preserved the wood very well. It has given way to the weather but little.

We walked up the steps and were met by a man who takes care of the place. To him each of us gave twenty-five cents.

We walked up the same steps and took hold of the same door knocker that has been used ever since the house was built. It would do for a half dozen new fashion ones.

The door will stand for years. It swings on the same massive hinges, stout enough for a barn door.

The hall is wide and runs through the house. On the right hand side are two parlors; in the west parlor is a globe that he used. Over the fireplace is a painting representing a naval fight between the British and Spanish off the coast of South America. The British fleet was under the command of Admiral Vernon after whom Mount Vernon was named. Gen. Washington's uncle, Lewis Washington was with Admiral Vernon at the time of the fight. This Lewis Washington bequeathed Mount Vernon to Washington at his death.

Well, I have strayed from my subject.

In the fireplace are the same old andirons, large and cast upon honor.

From the west parlor we went into the dining room. This is quite a large and pleasant room. Over the fireplace is an engraving of a sunset. For a description of this, I shall have to let you turn to your history. It is useless for me to try and describe it. It shows what human skill can do.

Among the relics in this room are a pair of saddle bags that he used when he made his first journey to Fort Pitt. They are made of leather and were put on behind the saddle to carry provisions, etc. There are two pistol holsters which he used during the Revolution. Also there are the legs of a compass with which he surveyed. There is a harpsichord which was given to Mrs. Washington's daughter on her wedding day. A few of the keys have a little music in them.

In the parlor, nothing is left but the old andirons in the fireplace.

The windows are still good. The carpenters were not saving of wood when they built the house.

The next room was Washington's bed chamber. This is a very pleasant room on the second floor in the south end of the house. There are two large windows overlooking the Potomac and the tomb. The room is about 16x18 feet and 7½ or 8 feet high.

There is a bedstead in the room but I think it is not the one on which he died but one on which he often slept. The one on which he died was an old one and has been removed. The one on which he died was an old one and has been removed. The one there is of the same pattern.

Here we stood on the same floor that his feet last trod. From the same windows we looked upon the Potomac that he saw in his last look upon earth.

Here in this small plain room, the greatest and best man that America ever saw closed his eyes in death.

Here he studied how to govern and to plan the principles of free government which for the last two years his countrymen's children have been doing their best to destroy.

We left the room and descended the stairs down which he was carried to his last resting place.

The portico which runs the whole length of the east side of the house looks a little more decayed than the rest of the house, but if properly taken care of will last for many years.

The stone floor was brought from the Isle of Wight. They show some signs of crumbling. They are of a gray greenish color, very much like slate.

As you look at the house from the west, you will observe that the roof is painted red. The shingles are of the same size and the ends rounded like a U.

On the right of the house is the kitchen, on the left the white servant's house. On the right of the kitchen is the butler's house and on the left of the white servant's house is the garden house close to the flower garden.

South of the butler's house are the stables and barns and on the south side of the lawn is the vegetable garden. There is about two thirds of an acre in it perhaps more.

There are a few fruit trees, peach and pear. We picked up from the ground some pears. They were pleasant but the tree was growing old having borne fruit for over sixty years. Mr. K. gathered some to carry home.

The garden is surrounded by a brick wall. The garden gate has swung ever since Washington was alive. We walked through the vegetable garden.

From the vegetable garden we walked around the lawn to the flower garden. This is about the same size of the vegetable garden.

I wish I could remember the names of the different flowers and plants and where they came from. Some are from South America and

others from England. There are two dwarf palms that grow in boxes. They have lived for seventy or eighty years and are not over four feet high.

The borders of the flower beds are box wood. They are an ever-green shrub and were imported from England.

The hot house was destroyed by fire last winter. This contained many choice plants with which Washington took special pains.

In looking through the garden one cannot but admire his love for flowers.

From the garden we went to the well. This is pretty deep. We drank some of the best water that ever came out of a well. It was as cool and clear as anyone could wish. From the well we went to the old vault where his remains lay until '36 when they were removed to the present vault built on the place he had chosen. Here rests the ashes of Washington and his wife.

The tomb is a quiet place, surrounded by shade trees in which the birds have built their nests. I saw several nests in a weeping willow that overhangs the tomb.

The path from the steam boat landing passes close by the tomb. The lawn in front of the house slopes toward the river for about halfway. The rest is covered with trees.

The house stands some seventy or eighty feet above the river. It is about fifty feet long, twenty-five wide and twenty-four high.

I cannot think of anymore to write about at present.

Will try and answer all questions concerning it.

Letter #75

Camp Near Fort Lyon, September 8, 1863

Dear Sister Amelia,

As you have had the kindness to remember me with a letter I shall now write you an answer.

I am as well as usual. I do not go to see the doctor so often as some who unfortunately are unwell.

We have a good many men who are unfit for duty. Some of them have been pretty sick.

One man died. He was a sergeant in Co. D. His name was Lewis. His father is an Episcopal minister and lives in either Plymouth or Watertown, I have forgotten which.

He was not over nineteen and hardly that. His father and mother arrived here the day after he died. His brother had gone to Washington to get a furlough, leave of absence, to take the body home.

He had been sick about two weeks with diptheria. He died Friday night, I think.

Will Plumb does not get better. I doubt very much that he will ever get well.

I should have liked very much to have heard Mr. Richard's sermon to the children and others.

Our chaplain does not have the same chance to preach as we are so scattered.

Sunday we had an inspection and review by Col. Kellogg. When he got through and we were going to have preaching it began to thunder so we marched back to our quarters.

About 6 P.M. while I was eating my supper someone said, "There is Seth Plumb of the 8th C.V. and sure enough there he was. He looks

very well and healthy. He has a furlough of seven days. He leaves on Friday for his regiment. We did not expect to see him. I must close.
From your brother,
Lewis

Dear Sister Cornelia,

I suppose your patience is pretty much gone. I would have written before this had there been anything worth writing about.

When I was down to Mount Vernon and saw Gen. Washington's flowers it made me open my eyes. There were so many kinds of plants and flowers that I could not remember them so gave it up as a poor job.

Some rose bushes there are over seventy-five years old and they will live for many years to come if let alone.

The rose bushes were not in blossom so I saw but one rose in the whole garden.

The flowers are not planted in beds but are enclosed by borders of boxwood. This boxwood is the same that is used to make hedge fences. It can be trimmed to grow in almost any shape you wish.

The flower garden covers over three quarters of an acre. There are a good many choice plants, some came from South America and are almost one hundred years old.

I have seen but one school house in Virginia and that is in Alexandria.

September 9, 1863--

As I have a few spare moments before the mail goes out will finish this letter.

If the paymaster keeps his word we will be paid tomorrow and get our state orders about the 11th.

I cannot think of anything more worth writing about so shall close. Give my best respects to all the boys and girls.

From your brother,
Lewis

Tell Frank that I shall write him a good long letter in a few days or as soon as I can find the time.

Letter #76

Camp of Co. A. 19th C.V. Near Fort Lyon, Va.
September 15, 1863

Dear Brother Phill,

Your very interesting letter with Pa's arrived on Sunday and right glad I was to get them.

The news from here is not very new nor is there much new going on. There is to be some shifting of four companies. We are to turn over Redoubts C & D to the 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery. Company B will go to Fort William. Company E will help us, company H will go to Fort Ellsworth, Company K to Redoubt B. After this we will not have so much guard duty to do.

Last night on dress parade an order was read that three companies from the 19th and two from the 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery were to take five days' rations and one blanket and under command of Capt. Ells of Co. D go down in the neighborhood of Occoquan and look after guerrillas and bushwackers.

This is the first time that any of the 19th have been sent to look after rebels and we have been in Virginia almost a year.

It is a year today since I left home. It hardly seems half as long. But time flies, perhaps faster with me than with you. I think it ought to so as to get out of the army sooner.

Well! Whoever thought that the 19th Conn. Vols. would be in service a year and not go out of sight of their first encampment.

I don't know where we will winter but doubt if we stay here all of the fall and winter.

We are having pretty good times at present. Capt. Wadhams is just the best captain in the service. There is not a man in the company who does not like him. Our First Lieut. Potter is a pretty good officer, rather young but good natured and agreeable.

The company reports thirty-four men for duty out of seventy-one. Perhaps you wonder how and where they are. Well, there are over twenty men detailed out and do not do duty with the company. Then there are six in the hospital, namely, Norman and Chas. Barber, Frank Bunnell, Henry Hotchkiss, Jo. Bradley and Wm. Plumb who is the sickest man in the regiment.

Frank Bunnell is not much better. Henry Hotchkiss will come back to the company in a few days. Jo. Bradley is helping as a nurse. Norman Barber is dangerously sick. He has had diptheria and it has left his throat in a very bad state. Myron had the hypo pretty bad before his father came. If you or Pa do not come down this fall or winter, I shall have it and the blues in good earnest.

Ed Pond has about given up trying to get a commission in a negro regiment. He has concluded to stay where he is, which is wiser. But he did not give up until after he had been to Washington where he got some good advice or a few hints that he was getting ahead of the president or the times.

Theodore has been to Washington. Col. Kellogg told him when he got his month's work done he could have a pass for five days. So Theodore has been to Washington to see the sights and elephants.

There were some copper-heads here last spring when Lee was making his invasion of Pennsylvania and during the riots in New York City. But after the battle of Gettysburg, the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, they drew in their horns, blotted peace from their vocabularies and are now all right. The only thing they could blow about was negro troops but since the attack on the rebel works on Morris Island by the 55th Mass. negro regiment, they have shut up their heads entirely. As long as everything goes strong they will go with it.

We expect a few conscripts down here sometime but we don't know when. We are told that the steady ones are picked out and sent to the 19th C.V.

I wish that Lucious Carter had been drafted. I should have liked seeing the old man fly around and try to buy a substitute at half price. It is all very well for us to look on from behind our breast works and see the war go on. If we ever go to the front our drill and discipline will be of great help as we can work as artillery or infantry which few regiments in the service can do.

We do not have roast corn very often as it costs three ears for five cents. Eggs: I do not pretend to know how much they cost per dozen.

If you wish any dogs to hunt rats, there are plenty of them in Fort Lyon as the Dutchmen have three dogs to every man and a peck of fleas in the bargain.

Col. Kellogg is sitting on a court-martial at Fort Albany so we are under the command of Major Smith.

I am near the end of my sheet so must close. Guess this will be a poor answer to your letter, but it is the best I am capable of writing.

Please excuse all bad mistakes as well as small ones and answer as soon as you can find time.

I remain as ever,

Yours most truly,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #77

Near Fort Lyon, Va., September 16, 1863

Dear Father,

Yours and Phill's letters arrived in due course of time. Now that I have written Phill an answer will try and hatch up something to write to you.

I suppose you have seen Mr. Kilbourn and have heard all the news and anecdotes that he laid in store for those at home.

Since he left Mr. H. Beach has arrived. Thomas has been showing him around the country and city.

Mr. Potter leaves for home tomorrow. He has had a pretty good time I think, although I don't know how he enjoyed himself.

Wilson has a very sore throat, a little touch of diptheria. One of our men, Norman Barber, has had a very bad throat. The canker has eaten in so that the doctor has almost given him up. He has been very healthy most of the time. His wife has been down here but just left before he was taken sick.

Our hospital is about two miles from here near Fairfax Seminary. They do not move it every time we move as it could not be bettered by moving.

Will Plumb was taken to the hospital the day after we arrived here. I have not seen him since. Charley Plumb has arrived and spends most of his time at the hospital so I do not see him.

The doctor does not like to have us to go there very much for it disturbs those in the room with him and does not help them to get well faster.

The historian of the 19th thus far has been Theodore F. Vaill.

I have not asked him if it would be best to drop Kirby Smith from among those who have distinguished themselves in the present rebellion. I think that Litchfield's history in this war will shine as bright if not brighter if Mr. Kirby Smith is dropped and forever forgotten. I don't care to have the Benedict Arnold of this war come from Litchfield or vicinity. Amos Kilbourn is in the neighborhood of Gen. K. Smith. Perhaps a loyal Litchfielder will wipe out the disloyal one and so call it even.

I have not heard anything about Mr. Ives. The last I heard about him was that he was in New York City. When he left home he told them he might not be back in ten years. He and his grandfather have dissolved partnership.

Mr. Miner is pretty well. Has been very healthy most of the time.

A year ago today we left Camp Dutton and bade goodbye to those we left behind. It has been a short year to me. Don't know how it has seemed to those at home.

Tomorrow it will be a year since Geo. Booth was shot at Antietam

and Tom Mason was killed. Seth Plumb says that Mason died without a struggle. He was hit in the head, threw up his hands and fell dead. Seth rolled his body out of the way. He said he was never in a place where shells and bullets flew so as they did at that time.

When you see (if you do) Charley Adams please remember me to him and tell him we hope to welcome him back to the company one of these days.

Dwight Stone is well and as healthy as usual.

We do not have as many visitors as we had last winter and spring while at Fort Worth.

Last week Gen. Ripley of the Regular Army made us a visit and seemed well pleased with our appearance, etc.

Last night at dress parade, Col. Wessell's resignation was published so Lt. Col. Kellogg is at present in command of the brigade.

Col. Wessells leaves for home on Friday of this week with his family.

We don't know whether Col. Kellogg or someone else will be our next colonel. We cannot have a colonel until we have eight hundred and fifty men. We now have seven hundred and eighty.

I will send by Mr. Beach a picture of our redoubt also some pictures of the public buildings in Washington, also a letter.

I have not time to write anymore, shall have to close. Give my love to all the family and friends.

I remain ever your dutiful son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #78

Camp Near Fort Lyon, Va. September 22, 1863

Dear Father,

Again I take my pen in hand to answer your usual very interesting letter which arrived yesterday.

I am as well as usual. The health of the company is improving.

We are expecting to move somewhere or other but when or where is more than I or anyone else can tell.

Last Friday fifteen recruits arrived from Fort Trumbull, Ct. Two of them have come into Co. A. They are Chas. Goslee and St. John, an uncle of Wilson Potter.

Both enlisted as veteran volunteers and get \$700 bounty.

St. John has been in the cavalry service fifteen months. He has not been in service for over a year. He was wounded in a cavalry charge on the last Bull Run field and lay sick in Washington when we came through there.

Chas. Goslee looks pretty hard for a young man but he will have to leave liquor alone or suffer the consequences.

Col. Wessells will be home before this reaches you, if he is not there already.

Col. Kellogg has been making some promotions that surprise nearly everyone and disappoint others.

Sergt. Major Camp has been promoted to a First Lieut. Acting Adjutant; Theodore Vaill, very much to our surprise, was promoted to Sergt. Maj. He now ranks first in the line of promotion but as long as Col. K. commands the regiment, he will not be promoted for he is the colonel's right hand man. He does all the colonel's writing, keeps his accounts, besides doing his own business.

We are very glad that he was lucky for he has got the best place

in the regiment. He will not have to be up nights nor do any harder work than any of the officers.

I suppose before this you have seen Mr. Beach. I sent a picture of the redoubt to you and a book of pictures of the buildings in Washington for the children. I do not know that I could send you anything that would interest you more. Such as they are you are welcome.

While I am writing Ed Pond has come around and sends his best respects. Myron is about well. He goes to Arlington to carry dispatches in place of one of the orderlies who is not very well.

Today we were visited by Brig. Gen. De Russy who commands the defenses south of the Potomac. He was very much pleased with the appearance of the redoubt and the guns.

Things go on the same as ever. Col. Wessell's leaving does not change things any.

Col. Shermer of the 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery is in command, Col. Kellogg being president of a general court-martial held at Arlington.

The companies that went out looking for "Rebs" have returned. They reached here Saturday afternoon having marched since they left about one hundred and five miles in five days.

They went south until they met some of Meade's army out on the same business. They fetched in one gray-back and some stragglers and deserters from Lee's army. They looked pretty well used up.

The government has been drawing lumber to build barracks for the garrison of the forts, barracks being cheaper than tents. Sibley tents cost over \$50 each.

I received a letter from Leonard by the same mail. It was very interesting, giving all the news from Harris Plains and vicinity.

Wm. Hull has not received his furlough yet but he keeps telling that he will in a few days. He has set two or three dates but like the Millerites they have fallen through.

I must stop for the night.

September 24 3 A.M.--

I suppose yesterday with you was Cattle Show and today will finish the fair for the year.

The weather has been very cool. There was a heavy frost last night on the banks of the Potomac. For a few days past it has been quite chilly. Last year at this time it was as warm as one could ask for and a little warmer than wanted.

I have not been to Fort Scott yet to see Mary and Sam, do not know when I shall. Soldiers cannot set a time when they will go visiting.

The whiskey that we have is very strongly tinctured with Peruvian Bark. The doctor put in Chincaidine very much like quinine. I have not tasted of it yet so don't know anything about it.

Will Plumb does not change any. Charley is still here. Capt. Wadhams gave him a tent to stay in. Dwight Stone stays with him. They have put up a stove and do some of their own cooking.

I suppose that the Johnsons and company sympathizers are as bad or a little worse than some of the same up in Pennsylvania and would like to show their patriotism if Lee's army should come along. Well, I hope they would receive the same kind of treatment, that is, take away from them everything of use.

I hope that every dollar Mott makes in his present business will cost him twenty before he gets out of it.

As for Mary, I saw through her when she was down here last spring. I can play my cards to suit the times and her also.

Sam feels about discouraged. He has not been able to do anything since last December.

Moran, Augusta's better half is about of the same stamp. Says he has got enough of soldiering but as he has six or eight months longer to stay in the army will make the best of it.

I do not know that there is anything that will interest you so shall have to dry up, as the boys say when someone begins to talk and the rest do not wish to hear him.

Please remember me to all of the cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, and neighbors.

From your son,
Lewis

Letter #79

Camp Co. A. 19th C.V. Near Fort Lyon, Va.
September 28, 1863

Dear Father,

I received yours and Phill's letters today.

I had just been up to Arlington in place of one of the mounted orderlies who was sick. This is the first time I have been in the saddle since I left home.

Arlington was once the home of Gen. Lee. It is surrounded by trees and is situated on high ground overlooking Georgetown and Washington. There is a large tract of ground, between Arlington and the river, which was a part of the estate. Now it is covered with corn, grain, and vegetables.

All the work has been done by contrabands of which there are large camps. The government intends to have them raise enough to feed themselves.

The house is of brick. From the front door you can look down on the river and see all that is going on. The inside is nicely finished. Hung on the walls are paintings and on each side of the hall are antlers of deer.

On my way back I called at Fort Scott to see Mary Sam. She seemed very glad to see me. Said she had been there just a week.

Sam had the chills and fever every other day and looked rather poor.

Mary said that you have finished haying and that Phill wanted to come down here, see me, and the sights, and what war has done around Washington and vicinity.

Charley Plumb is making himself at home. How long he will stay I don't know and doubt if he does.

Will Plumb does not change much from day to day. Norman Barber from Harwington in our company is failing. His disease is diptheria. It is working down toward his vitals. When it reaches them he will bid goodbye to this world of war and rumors of war.

His wife left a few days before he was taken sick. The doctors are doing and have done all that human skill and medicine can do, but to little use.

He has been one of the best men in the company and one the captain thought a good deal of.

I don't know what his religious principles are but I never knew of his drinking or swearing.

Jo Bradley was here today. He says that the doctor will keep him as a nurse. He has given up bugling.

Frank Bunnell was here Saturday for the first time since he was carried to the hospital. He looks rather white.

Henry Hotchkiss is at work in the kitchen. He is pretty well.

Myron has gone on full duty today for the first time since he was taken sick.

Good Osborne is now laid up in the same way.

I must close for the night as it is near roll call and I am rather tired.

Saturday morning--

I guess you are out of patience waiting for this letter. It should have been sent in the early part of this week.

Yesterday, I got a pass and started to go to Fort Scott. I got as far as Alexandria when it looked so much like rain that I gave it up. About noon it began to rain like shot and kept it up all the afternoon. If I had gone there should have had a moist time coming home.

Charley Plumb left yesterday. You will see him Sunday.

There is a man from New Preston who was out in the 28th C.V. and told me all about Jay Ferris and Mr. Gregory. They were in the same company. Mr. G. died three days before they started for home. He had been well most of the time. Was taken sick when their time was nearly out.

This man is a Dutchman and came down with the intention of enlisting in this company.

I suppose Hi Spencer is still at home taking things comfortably. I do not know how long he will stay there but think he would do as much good here.

Last week the 11th and 12th Army Corps passed through Alexandria. They were feeling pretty gay.

Long transportation trains of army wagons and artillery have been coming all the week.

One night last week a bridge three miles from Alexandria was set on fire. The sentinel at Fort Wm. saw it and had it put out.

The bridge is over a creek on the Alexandria and Orange R.R.

The same night Lt. Col. DeLany of Alexandria was taken prisoner, by his own son, who is a captain in the rebel army, and taken to Richmond.

Please remember me to all the friends and neighbors and love for all at home.

Yours ever the same,
Lewis

Dear Brother Frank,

I have skipped you but did not intend to leave you out.

The other day I went up to Arlington and saw Gen. Lee's house. It is now used by Gen. DeRussy division headquarters for all of the fortifications south of the Potomac.

Lee's farm is cultivated by contrabands of which there are large camps. There are over six hundred acres under cultivation, some corn and some garden vegetables.

The house overlooks the Potomac. With a glass one can see what is going on in Washington and Georgetown.

There are plenty of trees around the house.

The house is built of brick.

Lee owned twenty thousand acres. Some of it is very fine land and some is good for nothing.

I saw plenty of little black children running around. Some of them were pretty ragged and some looked as if they had just tumbled out of a band box. Where they got their finery is more than I can imagine.

I cannot think of anything more of interest to write about so shall have to close.

Please write another letter as soon as you can find time.

Yours most affectionately,

Lewis

Letter #80

Near Fort Lyon, Va., September 29, 1863

Dear Brother,

Well, I suppose that you will soon be looking for another letter from me in return for yours and so here it is.

I saw Mary Merriman yesterday at Fort Scott. She looks just the same as ever and I think she is the same old sixpence.

Sam is looking pretty poor. He has the chills and fever every other day. They are having a good deal of it in the 1st Arty.

Cousin Ed Smith is under arrest and has sent in his resignation. I do not know what the charges are against him but Capt. Wadhams says that he told the colonel that he could not do duty as a soldier and a gentlemen and therefore should resign. Soon after the adjutant came and told him that he was under arrest.

The colonel does not want him to resign but his mind is made up and there is no use trying to persuade him to remain.

October 1--

Well, I guess that after a while, I shall finish this long neglected letter.

The box arrived yesterday afternoon. Everything arrived safe, nothing was injured. Everybody that has tasted of the butter and cheese says they are of first quality. The cakes did not mold the least bit. I am very glad you sent the balm.

Charley Plumb leaves for home tomorrow morning. The doctor says Wm. is out of danger but shall not let him go home until he is some better.

A good many of the boys in some of the companies are having the chills and fever. Everyday some if not all of them shake. They have it in the 1st Arty. more than we do here.

Col. Kellogg has removed his headquarters once more. They are now between Forts Wm. and Ellsworth where we are to go in two or three weeks.

There is to be a redoubt built and I suppose we shall have it for a winter's job. We shall finish what little there is to do around here then the Dutchmen will take possession.

This is the month for target practice. We shall, I think, do it in the early part of the month. I wish you could be here to hear how loud the Parotts can talk and how far they can throw a shot.

Oct. 2--

Well, I guess you will wonder why this letter does not come home.

I got a pass today and was going to Fort Scott to see Mary Sam but when I got as far as Alexandria it up and rained like shot. So I have returned and now shall fill up the remainder of the sheet with something or other.

John Bishop is lying in his bunk laid up with a sore toe. He has been grunting around for some little time.

Goodwin Osborn has the same kind of sores on his ankles. Some of the time they ache and at other times he forgets them and raises (illegible) all over the barracks making the boys roar with laughter until they have to hold their sides for fear of splitting them.

Capt. Wadhams is out on picket today in the rain will have a moist time. Will Potter is in his bunk reading the news of the day. Corp. Cables has just put himself in an attitude of sleep. Ed Pond is on guard at Col. Kellogg's. Ferris Pond and Seth are well as usual. Frank Bunnell is still in the hospital. He does not get well very fast. He has been in the hospital quite a long time, has been here once since he went there.

As I am out of news shall have to close. Next time, I will try to have a more interesting letter for you.

Excuse all mistakes and blunders and answer this as soon as you can.

I remain truly your brother,

Lewis

CHAPTER 5

Back to Fort Worth
(October 8, 1863-May 11, 1864)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter begins with Lewis Bissell's regiment being brigaded with the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery and the new unit divided among Fort Worth, Fort Ellsworth and Fort Williams. Colonel Henry L. Abbot was named commander of the brigade.

The 19th continued its artillery practice and the War Department took notice. On November 23, the 19th was changed to the 2nd Connecticut Heavy Artillery. The switch meant more than changing colors from yellow to red. Heavy artillery regiments were manned by twelve companies as compared to the infantry complement of ten. The staff of officers also had to be enlarged. When the number of new soldiers needed was added to the number of replacements the old 19th had not yet filled, the total showed the 2nd Connecticut woefully under-manned.

The problem was resolved by sending recruiting parties to Connecticut which were very successful. By March 1, 1864, the regiment had received 1,100 recruits to bring its strength to 1,800.

In the West, Rosecrans had retreated to Chattanooga after his defeat at Chickamauga. Braxton Bragg, the Confederate general, laid siege to the city. Grant, who was in complete command in the West, replaced Rosecrans with General George Thomas, who had saved the army from annihilation at Chickamauga. As Grant began his campaign to relieve Chattanooga, Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers.

In the fall, there was action in the Eastern theater, but no major engagements occurred even though campaigns were planned. On the 19th of November most people failed to realize the significance of the address President Lincoln delivered at Gettysburg. The crucial battles of Chattanooga (Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge) were fought at the end of November and ended in Federal victories.

In December, Lincoln issued his ten per-cent plan for reconstruction which was not well received by the Radicals. An acrimonious relation with Congress was not unique to Lincoln; Davis was having serious problems in Richmond with the Confederate Congress as well. Despite the conflicts on the homefront the war continued. Lincoln, in February, ordered 500,000 men drafted by March 10.

On March 9, Ulysses S. Grant was commissioned a lieutenant general with authority over all armies. On May 4, the Army of the Potomac, still commanded by George Meade and accompanied by Grant,

began its spring campaign. Lee immediately engaged the Union force in the Wilderness (May 5-6).

Grant's losses were heavy but he pushed on and the armies collided at Spotsylvania May 10 and 12. One of the many Union casualties was General John Sedgwick, commander of the VI Corps. He was replaced by Horatio Wright.

At the same time of the Virginia movements, Sherman had begun his march through Georgia towards Atlanta.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. From his letters, try to determine whether there has been any change in Lewis Bissell's values. Has he reaffirmed many? modified some? clarified others? He has been in the army for over a year. How has it affected him? Do you sense that he has matured in any way? How is he different, or the same, from when he joined the army in September 1862? What are his feelings about the army at this point in time? Is he ambitious for a promotion? Is he willing to reenlist? How does he feel about men who avoided or deserted the army? Can you imagine Lewis ever considering desertion?

At this point, try to draw a character sketch of Lewis Bissell. What is his sense of humor like? What do you think he talked about to his friends? Is he gregarious? What do you like about him? What do you not like about him? Would he make a good friend?

Northern Society. A civil war always has the potential of brother fighting brother, father fighting son, cousin fighting cousin, etc. The American Civil War had many examples of family members fighting on opposite sides. Lincoln, for instance, had brothers-in-law who fought and died for the South. What effect do you suppose this had on society? How does Bissell handle the possibility of a relative (distant of course) helping the Southern cause?

As demands for manpower increased, the government was forced to draft. We have discussed the effect of a draft. Now take a close view of the effects of the widely publicized draft dodging and bounty jumping activities. Were these evidence of protest, corruption, or cowardice? Did the South suffer from protests against its government and have problems with its draft? How did the South deal with its problems?

How does Lewis feel about being away from his home? Are things changing at home that concern him? How does he view society's perception of him as a soldier? Does he ever feel left out?

The Army. During the time period covered by this chapter, the army in general, and the 2nd Connecticut in particular, added many recruits. How did the army handle this great influx of new people? What were the veteran soldiers' reactions to the new recruits? How did the recruits adjust to the army? In what ways did the army change?

Has the mood of the men in Company A changed since the last chapter? To what can you attribute the change?

Be sure to follow the health of the recruits as well as you can and try to determine any similarities between their experience and Bissell's when he was a new soldier.

Finally, assess this regiment as it prepares to enter combat. Is it a well-prepared regiment? Is it well-led? Is it loyal? Is it disciplined? How would you predict what its behavior will be on the battlefield?

ITEMS FOR IDENTIFICATION

Ague: If you don't know by now, find out!

Russian Fleet's visit: Supportive of the Union cause?

Dahlgren Gun: Inventor and son famous, why?

Rip-rap: A bum rap and you're here.

Mortars: Size and Range?

Horace Greeley: "On to Richmond" among many others.

Henry Larcom Abbot: Involved in great engineering feat after war.

Stephen H. Weed: A hero at Gettysburg.

Elon J. Farnsworth: Led a suicidal cavalry charge at Gettysburg.

Andrew H. Foote: Congress thanked him.

Turner Ashby: Another Stonewall?

William H. French: Mine Run scapegoat?

Edward Everett: Did Abe steal his show?

James G. Bennett: Why is Bissell surprised he supported Fremont?

Gov. Andrew Curtin: A Lincoln man, was he reelected?

Albion P. Howe: Tried Lincoln conspirators.

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

The following suggested assignments cover chapters five through eight.

When Bruce Catton wrote his Pulitzer Prize-winning A Stillness at Appomattox, he consulted the letters of Lewis Bissell. A wonderful opportunity, therefore, exists to use the historical method to form hypotheses from the letters and check them with the work of a professional historian. Chapter five of the letters corresponds to chapters one and two in Stillness, chapter six to chapter three, Bissell's chapter seven corresponds to Catton's four and five, and chapter eight of Bissell covers nearly all of chapter six of Catton's book.

Over this span of chapters, there are other topics worth further exploration. One is a closer examination of the lives of the common soldier in each army. Bell Irvin Wiley's Billy Yank and Johnny Reb provide a valuable account of Civil War life and conditions of the soldiers and give the student an opportunity to compare the experience of Bissell with many others. A second topic worth further study, is the history of the Confederacy. Clement Eaton's A History of the Southern Confederacy is a good source.

A discussion of the reasons for the North winning the war, or the South losing it, can be quite lively. David Donald's Why the North Won the Civil War contains five fascinating essays. Kenneth Stampp's "The Southern Road to Appomattox" analyzes the Southern loss.

Finally, students with an interest in military history may wish to study in detail the battles and campaigns in which Bissell and the VI Corps were engaged. Also, a study of the contrasting styles of Grant and Lee is very illuminating.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: One of Ours by Willa Cather

At this stage in Lewis Bissell's letters, he has been in the army for over one year. How has he altered in that time? He has not yet experienced combat, but he has lived in the rough society of camp and has certainly changed from the farm boy you first encountered.

There is a great influx of new recruits at this time. Observe the reactions of Bissell to these fresh and untried soldiers. Bissell himself was once in exactly the same position. Do you recall how he first reacted to the rigors and strains of camp life? What values enabled him to successfully adapt and to maintain a responsible and concerned attitude? Why do you think Lewis Bissell has not fallen into the patterns of drinking, gambling, swearing and immorality that so many soldiers find in the rough and strained society of camp life?

Written in 1922, One of Ours concerns the experiences of a young American, Claude Wheeler, during World War I, and much of the novel is devoted to describing his confused thoughts and longings as a farm boy in Nebraska. Have you learned as much about Bissell's life in Connecticut? What do you think might have been Bissell's aspirations and ambitions in that small farming community of Litchfield? Do you think he needed in any way to break free of that narrow world of family, church, and community? Do you think Bissell had a girl friend, or was ever involved in illicit drinking or hooliganism? What kinds of strains would that tightly-knit community life impose upon a young man?

War has often provided an opportunity for young men to escape the constrained life of their youth, and this is a theme you will observe in several of the books studied in this course. Why does Claude need to leave his comfortable and secure life in Nebraska? What are his longings and aspirations? From what mistakes and misjudgements is he trying to escape, and what other alternatives to military service might he have chosen? These questions are equally relevant to Lewis Bissell, Henry Frederick, Paul Baumer, and Stephen Crane's young hero whom you will encounter in chapter seven.

What conditions does Claude observe when he arrives at the front? You must bear in mind that the Americans were fresh, confident, and rather naive. They had come from a rich and bountiful young country, and were now in France, a country that had been involved in centuries of warfare, in Europe, a continent of long history and tradition. What are Claude's feelings about England and France, and does he in any way re-appraise his attitudes to his past and to America?

In considering our stories of war, you must not forget those who are left behind, especially immediate family. Can you see any similarities between the ambivalent feelings of Claude's family and the feelings of Bissell's close relatives? What are their attitudes to duty and patriotism?

Complete a short paper in which you imaginatively describe a scene or scenes in the trenches. This is not to be a short story, but a composition using sensory detail and various forms of imagery, similes and metaphors. I suggest that you describe a period when there is a lull in the fighting, possibly at night, or during a meal break. Your language should be evocative, concentrating on reproducing the physical appearance of the trenches and their surroundings. Before you complete this assignment, pick out a passage from One of Ours that effectively describes the battle-ground during a period of quiet. Make notes on the imagery, structure, and emotional tone of the passage, and give a brief presentation of your observations in class.

Chapter 5

Back to Fort Worth
(October 8, 1863-May 11, 1864)

Letter #81

Fort Worth, Va., October 8, 1863

Dear Father,

This time I shall write you from Fort Worth, as we pulled up stakes at Redoubt A on Monday of this week.

I think we are much better off here as it is more healthy than Fort Lyon. We are now in the highest fort in the line.

Monday morning the captain told us to pack up and be ready to start by noon.

Well, it did not take us long to pack. Then we waited until half past two before the teams arrived. You ought to have seen the boys load up the teams and start them off and then fall in. Some were with knapsacks and some without for they put them on the loads.

We were the roughest looking set of soldiers you ever saw as we had on our old clothes, covered with dust and dirt.

We are now in Sibley tents, stockaded about four feet high which gives us plenty of room. We do not want better quarters than these.

We have been at work most of the time fitting them up.

We relieved the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery Independent Battery. They have gone down to Alexandria to garrison a water battery close to the river. This battery has some of the heaviest guns in the service.

They were more taken by surprise than we were when ordered to move.

We, that is, our old tent squad are together once more.

When we took our tent and started cleaning it, lo and behold, we found it alive with bed bugs. We gave it a thorough cleaning out, but I suppose we will find a few which we will try to exterminate when they appear.

We are all very comfortably situated and could not ask for better quarters for the winter.

The companies here are A, B, E and K. We have on one side of us Co. B. and on the other K. They are the two roughest companies in the regiment and can do more swearing than any two companies in the regiment. They have more men in the guard house than all of the regiment put together. They have a captain that knows how to deal with them. Lieut. Shumway is 1st Lieut. of the company.

We will not associate with them. You may be sure of that.

The whiskey ration has played out. The barrel was drained to the emptyings more than a week ago. The principal reason why it was ordered was to check and prevent the chills and fever. But in spite of that some have them.

Cousin Lyman Smith has them pretty hard. He and John Bishop are the only ones that I know of that have them. John is one of the sort that has all the diseases that human flesh is heir to and more if they

could be had.

I must close for the night as it is time for roll call. So goodnight. After roll call I shall write a few lines if the boys do not carry on so I cannot.

Friday morning--

Have just breakfasted on fried beef, bread, butter and coffee, a very good breakfast for a soldier.

Today is the day for target practice but I do not know whether we will fire or not.

You wanted to know if we had had any desertions from our company. We have not had a single man desert and but four have been in the guard house beside Dave Whitmore. Twenty-eight have deserted from the regiment of whom four have returned.

Our officers have as little trouble with their men as any company in the regiment and we get more liberty because of it. Capt. Wadhams is getting everything we need for comfort. He acts like a father toward us.

Capt. W. wished to have Orson Buell stay in our company but as there will be some chance of promotion one of these days was the principal reason he went there.

I suppose that if Miss Sprague did not obtain the good will of the Johnsons she did of Phill. When a teacher gets the good will of the Johnsons she is about perfect.

I hope that Mott and Ida will be like a century plant and not bloom oftener than once in a hundred years if they do not die before that.

If Uncle Eve will not take the Irishmen he can have any quantity of contrabands he asks for and do such men as Greeley a favor.

I suppose before this time Lewis Hotchkiss is about the happiest man in Bantam. Suppose every hair on his head feels like a jewsharp. Well long life and a good wife to him.

The pictures you are welcome to. You can get Mr. K. to point out the principal objects of interest.

I shall have to close. Give my best respects to all the neighbors and remember me to all the cousins, etc., etc.

I remain as ever your most affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Everything in the box was all right, nothing was injured. I have not been to see Mary Sam yet.

Letter #82

Fort Worth, Va., October 9, 1863

Dear Mother,

I have written a letter to father and shall commence one to you but cannot tell when I shall finish it.

Since I last wrote we have been transferred from the 2nd Brigade to the 3rd. We are now under the command of Col. Abbott of the 1st Artillery C.V.

We are now out from under the Dutchmen so if they want to blow up anymore magazines we are so far off they will not hurt us.

The 19th now garrisons Forts Ellsworth, Williams and Worth. They are all strong and important forts.

As yet, Fort Williams has no guns. It is a new fort having been built since last May. I do not know how many guns can be put in there. They can put twenty-eight in Fort Worth.

The Wisconsin men have been at work most all summer fixing it up. They have got it partly finished and when complete it will look as nice as any parlor you know of or garden either.

I have not heard today how Mrs. Burnum is. Her parents are here. She has been so sick it was thought she could not live from one hour to another. She is some better but not out of danger.

One of our company has started home on a furlough. He has been sick a long time with diptheria and when he left it was thought he would hardly live to get home. He had to be carried on a stretcher and could not sit up or talk out loud. He belongs in Harwington. Norman Barber by name.

Will Plumb is much better. He is some stronger and grows stronger all of the time.

I wrote you in my last about the Rebs coming in here and setting a railroad bridge on fire. It was discovered by one of the hospital guards who got a man to take his place while he went and put it out. He found it afire in four places. He took his overcoat, wet it in the river and put out the fires. He then built a fire beside the track to stop the train coming in from the front.

The engineer stopped the train and after examining the bridge ran his train over it as it had not been seriously damaged.

The man that put it out belonged to Co. H. and it is reported that he will have a furlough of one hundred days and a present of a sum of money from the government.

The Rebs that set the bridge on fire were nine in number and were well mounted. The main body of about two hundred and fifty were about a mile and a half back.

They stopped at the house of a Virginia farmer and helped themselves to what they wanted.

There was among them a Capt. Delaney formerly of Alexandria. His father is a Lieut. Col. in the Union army. His health is poor so was in one of the departments in the city. At the time of the raid he was visiting a relative living in the neighborhood and was taken prisoner by his son and is now in Richmond.

We were in Redoubt A at the time.

Since we left Redoubt A it has been named Fort Weed after Brig. Gen. S.H. Weed formerly a captain of artillery in the U.S. Regulars. Redoubt B is to be called Fort Farnsworth after Brig. Gen. E.J. Farnsworth, Redoubt C after Lieut. P.H. O'Rourke of the U.S. Engineers, Redoubt D after Maj. Geo. A. Willard 19th U.S. Infantry (Col. of Volunteers). A water battery that has just been built below Alexandria is to be called Battery Rogers after Capt. Rogers killed before Charleston. Another battery on the other side of the river is to be named Battery Foote.

There are not over nine thousand men and one hundred and fifty guns in all the defenses of Washington.

October 10--

I asked Mr. Cables when writing to his folks to ask you to send by them a pair of woolen stockings. Perhaps they have told you before now.

Perhaps this fall I shall send home for a blanket. You need not be in any hurry to send it, if you have one. Perhaps if Pa or Phill come down they can bring it.

Wilson Potter says that his father is not well enough to leave his room. Most everyone who has been down here has been sick after they got home.

David Whitmore is expecting his wife here in a few days. Then we will be pretty well re-enforced with the feminine gender.

There are three here at present, Mrs. Sergt. Parks, Mrs. Brooks, and Mrs. Nettleton. Other companies have more than we. There are enough of them in camp to make quite a long company if their crinolines were spread out well.

I must close as I am about out of news.

Last night Good Osborn and I made Theodore Vaill a visit in his new quarters. We found him sitting in one of the nicest parlors you ever saw. He was seated in a barrel chair writing. The house the Col. and his family are living in is very nice.

Give my best love to all the family.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis

Letter #83

Camp at Fort Worth, Va., Oct. 22, 1863

Dear Brother,

Well, I suppose the first thing you will wish to know is how I am. Well, as Good Osborn says, I flourish like a green bay horse. That is about as near as I can get to it.

I have been a little out of tune for the past few days but nothing of a serious nature. The doctor says it is a little ague. I had a chill Sunday and one Tuesday and expected one today but it did not come along. Perhaps the pills scared him off so I shall train up tomorrow and see the firing, face the music, as the boys say.

Tomorrow, Friday, is our day for target practice with artillery.

The First Conn. have been here for the past two Tuesdays with some of their best cannoneers. We can shoot as close to the target as any of them if not closer. We are not afraid to practice along side of them.

They pride themselves on firing the one hundred pounders but I do not see that they get ahead of our men. They fired the famous Whitworth guns last Tuesday afternoon. It was so late that they had to leave before they fired all their shots so our non-commissioned officers took hold and did as well as the First.

There is not much news to write about just now.

A line of rifle pits is being dug by the convalescents from a camp near Fort William.

We, that is the 19th, are through digging for this winter and I hope forever after or as long as we remain in the army.

We have artillery drill for one hour and a half every morning right after roll call, that is about sunrise. This makes cool work for us but we are "sogers" and can live through it.

Trains are running in and out almost every hour.

It is rumored that Meade is driving Lee back into his stronghold. I hope he won't find time to stop this side of Richmond.

The removal of Rosecrans has taken us by surprise. The charges against him appear to be of a serious character.

We think Grant will make up all deficiencies and fill all

vacancies. What do you think about it?

Shall I tell you what we are doing in our tent tonight? It is very still with the exception that one fellow is sawing wood for the fire. Three have gone out for the evening to play whist. Good Osborn is reading the paper. Stone Potter and Myron are writing. Watt is lying in his bunk watching us.

Last night about roll call The. Vaill the sergeant major poked his head in the door and decided he would stay all night. So he stayed all night and would have stayed to breakfast but he could not as we do not have breakfast until between seven and eight after we have come in from drill.

Sunday there was brigade review and the 19th did so well that Monday on battalion drill Col. K. told the boys that he felt like getting off his horse and kissing everyone of them.

Next month there is to be a brigade drill and that will not be so gay.

I must close for the night. If I don't mail this letter tomorrow will tell you how the target firing comes off. Goodbye for the present.

Friday afternoon--

There were fifty-one shots fired this forenoon. This afternoon the one hundred pounder is to be fired by B. and K.

Our company fired ten shots this forenoon, one of them hit right under the target. If it had gone a foot higher it would have put a hole through it.

Shots hit on all sides of it, some over, some on one side, some on the other, some under but none went through it this forenoon.

A hundred pounder has just ripped forth.

I do not know how much potatoes cost for they are bought at the cook house with company funds which amounts to over \$150.

They sell the surplus rations. That is the way we get rid of what we do not want.

We draw flour in place of bread.

I wish you could come down. Do you think Pa would let you if I paid \$10 toward traveling expenses? If he will, come on and bring the quilt with you, just as soon as you get your fall work done.

They have moved the hospital to a house that Bishop John used to live in. Most of his furniture is there including a piano but it is out of tune.

Some of the furniture is very nice. The house is as pleasant as one could wish. You can see over a large tract of country which was once very beautiful.

We are living in tents stockaded with boards four feet high. We have plenty of room and good places to sleep. Myron has got some shavings and put them in his bed.

Wm. Plumb rode from the old hospital to the new one, a distance as far as from our house to Mr. Kilbourn's. He says that in a few days he will be well enough to have his clothes on.

I shave my face once a week. Do not let my beard grow out. Some of the men grow mustaches.

I must close. Write as often as you can now that the evenings are long.

I remain ever yours truly,

Lewis

Dear Father,

Again I take my pen in hand to answer your fatherly letter.

I ought to have written some time ago but have not felt very well for the past few days. Today I am feeling very well.

I had what is called the dumb ague, not the shakes but worse. Have had two attacks, one on Sunday and one on Tuesday.

After an attack one feels as if he had been drawn through a knot hole.

The doctor gave me plenty of quinine which broke it up.

Yesterday was my day for a chill but the day passed without one. I guess I shall be able to weather it through. I do not feel very strong. The quinine takes the strength as well as the fever out of me. The doctor does not put me on duty so I get along very well.

This morning I went over to the hospital. They have been moving it from one house to another. The former was too close to Fort William--only a few feet away. The noise of the garrison disturbed the sick.

I did not see Wm. Plumb but Joe Bradley says that he soon will be well enough to put his clothes on.

The house once belonged to Bishop John of the Fairfax Seminary. Some of the furniture remains and is very nice or was. It has been used by everybody as might be expected in military headquarters.

There is not much going on here so we do not have very exciting times.

Col. K. has battalion drill three times a week. Next month Col. Abbott will be in having brigade drill on the same ground that Col. K. used for his old dusty battalion drill last winter.

We have the best quarters we could reasonably wish for.

Rainy days it is very pleasant to stay in. When it rains through everything then we are very much like the old darkies house which needed shingling but could not be because of the rain and when it cleared off it did not need it.

Capt. Wadhams has been detailed on a general court-martial and is up at Fort Ward most of the time.

Friday evening--

It is now raining quite hard.

At dress parade tonight an order was published that a dress parade would be held at Col. Kellogg's. I hope it rains all of tonight and tomorrow.

This evening a Mr. Bristol, Wilson Potter's intended father-in-law arrived. He has been traveling out west and comes here to finish up.

Day before yesterday Lieut. Hosford arrived from conscript camp. He had three men with him.

Capt. Williams is in New Haven--judge, advocate, and will not be back this winter.

Capt. Wadhams is having a brick house built. The brick walls are most up--soon the roof will be up. When it is done, it will be quite a house.

Last Sunday there was a brigade review by Col. Abbott. He was very much pleased with the appearance of the 19th. We beat the 1st Ct. all hollow.

After the boys came back from review, they found a lot of cavalry horses. They picked up all the old rope they could find and after horses they went. Soon they came in, some with one, others with three, four, and five. Before night they had about seventy or eighty hitched around the barn.

Monday morning Capt. Hubbard had them fastened to a long rope and off they started for the city.

They stopped at the quartermaster's who picked out four or five of the best for his own use. They started again but the horses would not travel so they had to cut them loose. Finally, they got them in safely. I wish you could have seen the boys performing on horseback with a rope for a bridle.

How do you like the idea of calling out the three hundred thousand more men to finish up the war?

Now, some of the old copper-heads who have not as yet been drafted will have long faces when they have a ticket handed to them.

If there is a chance for men to come into this regiment, I hope they come, the sooner the better. It will make the duty lighter for us poor fellows.

I have heard or read in the papers that even now in some places they are paying men to stay at home. If three hundred will bring a man into the army I do not know what will keep them out of it.

I suppose Geo. Baldwin will make free men of all the Irishmen and some that are not smart enough to be Irishmen.

I see by the paper that Morris has a very smart set of select men and that everything in that little town will flourish like a hedge fence.

Mrs. Burnham is some better. I do not know how well she is.

I hear that there are plenty of school teachers applying for schools but I don't know how true it is.

Martha Merriman thought of teaching, I hear, if she could get a good school for the winter.

It is roll call and I must close for the night.

Saturday--

It is raining hard this morning and I am not on guard.

The hospital has been moved into the Bishop John house.

When the war broke out Bishop John was president of the Fairfax Seminary. When Ellsworth landed in Alexandria and was shot Bishop John upon hearing of it ordered his horses hitched to his family carriage and started for Richmond. He left everything behind, all of his papers and furniture.

In the house is a piano, a little out of tune and a good deal of furniture.

I do not know whether cousin Ed Smith has been released from under arrest. He has been down here once or twice. Cousin Ed Vaill called one Sunday morning with Ed. Smith.

We have been firing the one hundred pounder. The charge is ten pounds of powder as coarse as chestnut. It makes things tremble some when it goes off. The rails of the carriage are sanded to prevent the gun from dismounting. When the ball strikes the dirt sometimes it throws it up one hundred feet or more.

While I am writing an old darkey has come in for dirty clothes to wash. He lives close by the fort. He says his old master was Ashby, the rebel general, who troubled us so much and is now dead. I hope his rebel ashes will rest in peace.

Cousin Lyman Smith's health is much better. He has been about used up with fever and ague.

Some of the men in the regiment have had the shakes pretty hard.

The Dutchmen are having pretty hard times with fever and lager beer. They have a good many sick and are likely to have more for they do not take the best of care of their men.

I must close. I have written but little news this time but there is not much to write about.

The boys are healthy and getting along well.

The weather is not very cool. We have had a few frosts. The leaves on the trees have turned some but have not dropped off.

I suppose Charley will look wild after the first of next January when he sees how many will be drafted.

I must close. Give my love to all the family and mother in particular.

I remain as ever,

Yours truly,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #85

Fort Worth, Va., October 31, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letter arrived this afternoon.

If you wish to know the reason why I have not written it is that I have put off writing from one day to another expecting by every mail to receive a letter from home. But nary a letter came.

You need not trouble yourself about me having the dumb ague. The doctor and I went to work and broke it up with cathartics and quinine pills. So at present I am well as ever.

You wrote about shirts. You may get the cloth and make them and when needed will send for them. Be sure and make them large enough in the neck and wrists.

My old shirts have not worn out yet. I have not worn a single hole or ripped a stick in them. I have never seen shirts wear so well. I shall write about the boots in the morning.

Myron has been unwell for some eight or ten days. Now he is about, is well as ever and is again on duty.

I judge from what I hear him say that he does not get a letter from home every week. Sometimes his father writes on half a sheet of fools-cap and leaves the other half for Myron to answer on. Please keep this to yourself.

Yesterday cousin Ed Smith showed himself dressed in citizen's clothes. He rode into camp on an old horse and had a large roll of blankets for Lyman. He said he should leave for home in a day or two. He looked funny enough in his new dress.

I see by the Litchfield Enquirer that Col. Kellogg has been promoted to Colonel and Maj. Smith to Lieut. Col.

Capt. Wadhams was in our tent this afternoon and said that Capt. Spencer of Company K had received a letter from Lieut. Knight that he had heard that the new major was an outsider. He wanted to know how some of the old captains liked it.

Cousin Ed said yesterday that if we should have Maj. Cook of

the 1st Ct. for colonel we would be the worst regiment out in less than six months as he was despised by both officers and men of the 1st Ct. V. According to Ed, he is a man of no principles and has no kind feeling for the men.

There has been a rumor around camp that old Gen. Cook was doing his best to get his son in as major. If the rumor is true, we have got in ahead of him.

Col. Kellogg is worth a whole company of Cooks.

I suppose you have heard of the drumming out of camp last Thursday. I see the New York Herald has an account of it and calls us the 19th Ct. Heavy Artillery. That is the name we go by down here.

Now, if you will all stand at attention, I shall do my best to tell you all I know about it.

The culprit was a member of Co. I by the name of Neevey. He deserted last November, went home, enlisted in a New York regiment, deserted, was picked up and taken to Bedloe's Island. There he was very sick and got his discharge, so the story goes.

He came down here and went out to the front as a sutler's clerk when Meade was chasing Lee. He soon came back and got into a store in the city as a clerk.

He came up to headquarters to see some of the boys and began to blow about some of the officers. He was arrested and tried before a brigade court-martial and sentenced to be drummed out of camp.

Thursday afternoon the regiment was ordered to come out in full dress for drill and dress parade.

When we had formed in line a daguerrian artist came on the ground to take our "mugs" as the boys would say. He took us standing in line of battle, in four ranks, in a hollow square and in four ranks at bayonet charge.

At dress parade the deserter was brought out under a guard of twelve men. They formed a hollow square with the deserter in the center.

When his sentence was read he was ordered to step to the front facing the Adjustment and take off his hat. This exposed his shaved head to view.

After the sentence was read, he resumed his place. The guard pointed their bayonets toward him which made him walk about perpendicular.

In the rear of the guard came our drummer and fifer and two others playing the Rogues March as they marched him back and forth in front of the line. His hat was off and he had on an old linen coat.

If you ever saw anyone look sheepish he beat them all.

After they had marched him back and forth two or three times the sergeant of the guard told him that if he was ever found inside the lines of the 19th he would be shot. Then he gave him a kick in the rear and off he started.

He ran as if the devil and all his imps were after him. He was not long in getting out of sight.

The men bit their lips to keep from laughing.

Last Tuesday was the last day of our target firing. One of our shots went within four inches of the bulls eye. That is something the 1st Ct. cannot come up to.

They have been down here trying to show us how but we think we can show them.

Next week we are to have brigade drill under Col. Abbott of the 1st Ct.

Today is muster. We have just been mustered for two months pay. I suppose we will get it in a fortnight.

Goodbye for it is roll call.

Sunday, November 1--

If Mr. Kenney has any boots of the same manufacture as those Mrs. Cables sent Mr. C. you may send me a pair, number 7, double uppers and double soled. Get good large legs if possible. Send a pair of stockings with the boots.

You need not be in a great hurry about sending them but be sure that the boots are of Beaches make. Perhaps if you are in his neighborhood you can call and examine them. I don't care much about square toes, round toes are preferable.

The boys are getting ready to go over to chapel this morning. But as I go on guard at 4 P.M. shall stay home.

Until further orders guard mounting will be at 4 P.M.

This afternoon there is to be a knapsack inspection, also the articles of war will be read in front of each company.

Will Plumb is able to sit up some each day. If it were not for the shakes he would get along pretty fast but they pull ones strength hard.

Tell mother when she makes my shirts to line the back and breast with soft cloth. I don't care about it being thick.

You want to know about the dumb ague. Well, the difference between that and the shakes is that you do not shake but have the chills and are in more misery while they last.

I am as well as ever.

Please remember me to all the friends and give my love to mother and all the family, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Yours most affectionately,

Lewis

Letter #86

Headquarters 19th Conn. "Heavy Artillery"
Fort Worth, Va., November 3, 1863

Dear Father,

Once more I have set myself down with pen in hand to answer your letter which was received today.

I am at this time well and enjoying good health and so are all my tent mates.

Just now there are but few sick in the company.

Once more death has taken from our company one of its most faithful men. After a short illness, Julius Windship died of softening of the brain.

He was in the same tent with me at Camp Dutton. Perhaps you remember him. His sister was there very often. It seems to me that you have written something about him. If you wish further information, about him, you can ask Leonard.

The doctors could not get him to tell them how he felt or what was the matter with him when he went to the hospital.

When changing his clothes, he stuck a nail in his foot. Soon his foot began to swell and he had to go and see the doctor. But he would not tell how he hurt it but said it was getting better.

Soon after this, he was taken sick and was sent to the hospital. He had some fever. The division medical inspector was in the hospital a short time before he died.

He appeared to be getting better and the doctors thought him out of danger and said he was the healthiest man in the hospital.

A few minutes before he died he was reclining on his elbow, talking with the nurse and appeared quite cheerful. He lay down, straightened out, his muscles relaxed, gasped twice and breathed his last without a struggle.

His body has been embalmed and sent to his father in Harwington. He has lost two sons, one a lieutenant in the Rebel army.

We were all taken by surprise when we heard of his death.

I suppose you have heard by now of our turning into heavy artillery. Now we think we are all right if we have to stay here three years or during the war. We do not know by what number we shall be known hereafter.

The boys have been getting the red on. That shows to what arm of the service they belong.

The old colonel has a broad grin on his face when he comes around to see the boys drill in artillery. He has been presented with a horse by the regiment and one night on dress parade the adjutant read to the regiment the colonel's acknowledgement. He promised to stand by the regiment through thick and thin and stay with it until its return home.

I suppose the Hon. John Hubbard is on his way to Washington to fill the place of Mr. Geo. C. W. ____ f. I hope the people he represents will be more satisfied with his votes than they were with Mr. W's.

We expect to see his face over here one of these days. His nephew Capt. Hubbard has received a commission as major in place of Smith who is our lieutenant colonel.

The Russian fleet is just above Alexandria. They fired a salute this afternoon. I have not seen them but some of the boys have and represent them as pretty large ships.

The rotunda of the Capitol has just been completed and the statue of Liberty put in place. The Stars and Stripes was run up from the very top and a national salute fired at the Navy Yard.

The capitol looms up like the Pyramids of Egypt. All of the large buildings around it are mere pygmies beside it. It is as white as snow.

There is not much news to write about just now.

The 1st Conn. Artillery are very jealous of us, especially is Col. Abbott. He thinks himself about the smartest military man around here because he is from West Point and has been on Gen. Bank's staff. For all of that Col. Kellogg is ahead of him on some points of military tactics.

I suppose before this reaches you a batch of men from the 19th will arrive in Litchfield County to recruit for the regiment. From Co. A will come Sergt. Hatch of New Preston. I don't know where he will establish his headquarters. He is a man whom you will like and is about the best man we could send at this time.

I have one of the wrappers with me and wish you would send me the other one.

I am not particular who makes the boots and am in no great hurry as long as the pleasant weather lasts.

Capt. Wadhams has just come in. He rapped on the door with a hatchet he borrowed to crack nuts with.

I shall have to close for the evening as the drum has just beaten for roll call.

November 4--

Have just breakfasted on beef steak, coffee, bread, and butter. Yesterday morning we had pancakes for breakfast. They were good enough for anyone.

The boys are talking, joking, laughing and full of fun just now.

You may send a few dried apples the next time if you feel disposed to do so.

The blanket or quilt is just the thing. Don't care a cent about the looks. Comfort is what is most wanted down here.

We had a cold snap the 30th, 31st and Nov. 1st. It did not thaw except on the 31st and 1st. Just now it is warm and pleasant out of doors. We do not have to wear gloves or mittens during the day.

As I have a few moments to spare thought I would fill up this blank space.

This afternoon the regiment has been on battalion drill and dress parade. The colonel seemed very anxious to see the men.

Yesterday Mr. and Mrs. McNeil and Mrs. Barber arrived fresh from Conn. Mr. and Mrs. McNeil do not seem to grow old very fast.

We prize visits such visitors very much., because when copper-heads show themselves, well, we don't care to associate with them. They are the ones who want to keep us here.

Tomorrow is to be set apart for military display. Col. Abbott of the 1st Artillery Brigade has ordered a brigade review and inspection. Inspection seems to be a military necessity but while I have been in the army I have not seen the necessity of using Sunday as a day for military display. I don't think the rebellion is anymore crushed by it.

I hear that you have heard all sorts of rumors about our leaving here. I think there is little danger of our going away for there are a good many recruits who have not been thoroughly drilled in artillery or infantry so they can take the field. Some are as green as grass, don't know anything.

How many men does the town of Litchfield lack to fill the quota? I hope if they have to draft they will get all the copper-heads.

But I must draw this to an end. Nothing new of any account has transpired. Guess nothing will happen very soon unless some of the Rebs make a dash upon us.

Hoping that I shall soon hear from home I remain as ever,

Your affectionate son,

Lewis

Letter #87

Fort Worth, Va., November 8, 1863

Dear Father,

As we, that is, the 19th C.V. have been inspected and reviewed by Col. Abbott commander of the Third Brigade, Defences South of the Potomac and have returned to our quarters and are now waiting

for him to come around and inspect quarters, I thought I would spend the time writing to you and Phill.

There has not been any religious service in the regiment today and I doubt if there will be as it is a very blustering and raw day.

Col. Abbott, a West Point officer, praised us very much for our marching, neatness of arms, etc.

Dr. Bostwick showed his face here Friday. He called on us in the evening and we had quite a little talk. He was present at the review but I did not see him to speak with.

Last night Sergeant Parks' little boy died. He had been sick for some time of a disease of the heart. They were in hopes that he would get well enough to go home. They are to have the body embalmed.

Capt. Wadhams is going to see Cols. K. and Abbott and try and get a furlough for the sergeant. He is Mrs. Wessells' brother and is very much liked by all of the company.

The little boy's name was Dudley Parks. He was three years old, rather small for his age and never a very healthy child.

I must stop for a short time as Col. Abbott has come to inspect quarters.

Well, he has come and gone and was satisfied with our quarters. Now I will proceed to business.

All the boys in the company are well.

George Bradley has been out west of here about a mile and a half doing safety guard duty.

Yesterday they sent word to the lieutenant saying he was very sick. The lieutenant sent an ambulance and had him taken to the hospital. When he reached there he had a high fever. I have not heard how he was this morning.

Will Plumb is gaining slowly and soon will be able to go home.

Over thirty men are in the hospital, sick. I don't know the exact number.

Last Monday I got a pass and went up to see Mary Sam. I found her the same as ever. Sam had a chill that day so I did not see him.

Moran, Gust's husband, looks as if he had been drawn through a knot hole or something smaller.

Mary has a small house with two rooms, one to cook in, the other a bedroom.

I ate dinner with her and Lieut. Sedgwick of Co. I. Had a good dinner of fish balls, tea, bread and butter.

She has been well all of the time. She did not say anything about the war, neither did I.

Tuesday, November 10--

Well, guess I shall finish this letter sometime this week.

There is to be a brigade drill this forenoon under Col. Abbott. Col. Kellogg ordered the 19th to form line of battle here and they are now marching up to the parade grounds.

Yesterday afternoon and night it snowed some and this morning is pretty chilly.

Now about the blanket. The 10th of next month, I can draw a blanket. It will cost \$3 but will not be as good as those we drew in Camp Dutton. If you are of a mind to send a blanket, I shall not object.

While I think of it, I would like to have mother put in a small bag of emptyings to raise pancakes with. Mrs. Mason sent the corporal some last winter and they were the best to be had.

We draw part of our bread rations in flour, wheat at that. Some of it is very good. Part of it we exchange for corn meal, which we let stand by the stove over night to rise. We got some yeast powder from the sutler but it is poor stuff.

We can make as good pancakes as you would care to eat and they do not cost us anything.

I wrote to Uncle Fred some fifteen days ago and directed my letter as he wrote me to.

Col. Kellogg has got his eagles on and treats the boys as well as he does the officers.

Maj. Cook will have to stay where he is. As for the old general, he had better not show his face down this way again for the regiment will get him into trouble if possible.

I suppose Sam feels as tickled as a baby with a new rattle but I guess that after he had been away from home a while it will play out.

The company is very well. John Bishop is improving.

We have to go on guard about once in eight days. These are the easiest times we have had since we came out. Don't know how long they will last but hope all winter.

Remember me to all the friends and neighbors.

Give my love to all of the family, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

I remain as ever your son,
Lewis

Letter #88

Fort Worth, Va., November 10, 1863

Dear Brother,

Well, I suppose I shall have to make good your letter by answering it.

A year ago the 7th of this month it snowed pretty hard and was quite cold. Today is cold and the men on drill will feel it some.

I am off duty as I do not feel very well and the doctor has excused me from drill.

I don't sing much now adays. My tune is no tune. I suppose you take the place of Mr. Ed Pond in the choir, now that he is waiting on Col. Kellogg.

I saw Mary Sam a week ago. She is the same old sixpence she used to be.

The farmers down here do not have to hurry with their work as you do. The seasons are longer and vegetation slower in growing than with you. They can work in the cool of the day and lie still in the hottest part. They do not have to hurry with their haying for they can commence in the middle of June and hay until September. They do not need half the hay you do.

Sunday Col. K. told the officers that he meant to have some of the men going home on furloughs all through the winter.

The boys are coming so I must close.

The wind is shaking the tent so perhaps it may take you a long time to decipher this letter.

I do not know how soon I shall get a furlough to come home but if you or Pa come down this winter, I shall be very glad to see either of you. We have good quarters and accommodations.

Next week on brigade drill they are going to fire blank cartridges. The boys don't like the idea as they have to clean their muskets afterwards.

Bill Hull has given up the idea of getting a furlough or a commission in a veteran regiment or in the commissary department in Alexandria. The boys mention it once in a while but Bill turns his head and pretends not to hear.

About the boots, you may get a pair of Beaches made. I should like irons on the heels but don't care to have them on the toes. When I get them shall have the soles nailed to prevent wear. You need not get the nails put in as I can have them put in to suit myself.

The irons on the toes are of little use as when the ground is a little moist it is very slippery due to the clay soil. Nails will prevent gravel in the foot from wearing out the soles and will keep ones feet from going out from under him and letting him down in the mud like a thousand of brick.

November 11--

Goodwin Osborn got a pass to go and see Whitney Smith who is a nurse in one of the hospitals in Washington.

While there he also saw the rebel prisoners that Generals Sedgwick and French captured. He says they were North Carolinians and Louisiana "Tigers." The N.C.'s were very tractable but the "Tigers" looked glum and sullen and said but little.

They said Old Sedg. stole a march on them--got close before they knew it.

One of them offered a dollar for a pie but the pie woman would not take his money. Good told the rebel that if he would give him the dollar he would buy the pie for him which he did. Good said, "You don't consider your money worth much." The Reb answered that it was worth as much here as anywhere.

As the mail will soon close, I shall have to close.

Yours truly,
Lewis

Letter #89

Fort Worth, Va., November 20, 1863

Dear Father,

By yesterday's mail I received yours and a goodly number of other letters. I shall try to answer them all at once for it will be a pretty hard job to think up enough that will be of interest to you all.

I am on the sick list today. Day before yesterday I was attacked by fever and ague and had quite a shaky time of it for about two hours. My teeth would chatter and I would shake from head to foot. After the shakes came the fever with a terrible headache. After an attack the body is very weak.

I had an attack this forenoon but not very hard.

The "Shakes" do not pain one as much as the "Dumb Ague."

You will see by my writing that my hand is very shaky.

There is one thing I don't want you and mother to trouble yourselves about and that is that I shall not have good care. The doctor appears to be very kind to me and not only that but Capt. Wadhams tells me to take the best care of myself and not go on duty and expose myself when I don't feel well.

Whether the doctor excuses me or not, it is not every captain that would tell his men that.

If this reaches you before you pack the box, will you put in some wormwood herb? It is the best medicine to break up the fever and ague that I know of.

The doctor gives nothing but quinine and that does not do the system any good.

This forenoon there was an old gray headed man here taking the names of all the men and their geneology. I suppose you would call him a geneologist.

He is going among all the New England regiments. He has papers from all the New England governors and a few generals.

The record that he makes is sent to the state governments. It is to be printed and kept among the government archives for the rising generation to look at. He asked who were our parents and grandparents and as much more as we would tell him. Then he wanted to know the name of the girl we thought the most of, her Dad and Mom, etc.

Last Tuesday the brigade was reviewed by Brig. Gens. Barry and DeRussy. After the review we had a brigade drill under Col. Abbott.

Gen. Barry saved the 19th from going to Gettysburg.

In his report he said that the Conn. brigade was the best drilled and disciplined brigade in the defenses of Washington south of the Potomac.

All that is needed to make us artillery is more men. Hope we will get them this time. Col. Kellogg is going to send more men home to recruit. You may tell Lucious Carter that now is the time and this is the regiment to enlist in. We want to have him just come along and as many more as have a mind to. There is a report that about fifty recruits are coming down here one of these days.

November 21--

Yesterday afternoon the regiment met at Col. K's for knapsack dress parade. When they got there had to have a knapsack drill and then dress parade. They got home after the moon began to show herself. When they unslung knapsacks they were almost swearing mad. But they soon forgot it and pitched into their supper which they devoured without much ceremony. Then all sat down to hear read Edward Everetts speech which he delivered at Gettysburg.

It is well worth the time and trouble as it gives a history of the battle and the causes that led to it also why Meade did not attack before he crossed the Potomac, etc.

To me the Southern Confederacy looks like a great bladder which when pricked will collapse and fall in.

We have been trying to prick it and have come very near it. I hope that Grant and Meade will do just that thing this winter.

I have received a letter from Harley Perkins and with it his Carte de Visite. I should like you to do the same for I suppose I shall not see any of you down here in person. Your picture would be highly prized as I have not seen your faces in over fourteen months.

What does Charley think about the draft and volunteering? We think that if we were at home we would not be long in taking the government offer and make for the 19th.

A good many in the 1st Artillery have enlisted as veteran volunteers. Geo. DeForest has enlisted and got the start of eleven months on the government.

Some of our boys say that if the Union Army keeps on gaining victories over the Rebs and the rebellion's legs begin to tremble, they will take the veteran bounty and go another three years.

I think I shall not try another three years after my term of service expires but shall make for home.

I shall have to close this letter hoping it will find you enjoying good health.

I remain as ever yours truly,

Lewis

Fort Worth, Va., November 21, '63

Dear Sister Amelia,

As you have taken the pains to write me it is with pleasure that I answer

It is raining pretty hard today and the boys are having gay times playing tricks on each other and keeping the tent squad in a roar of laughter.

I suppose you will eat your fill down at Grandpa's on Thanksgiving. The boys are talking about having a little something extra for Thanksgiving.

We do not have to go to the store and buy our clothes as you do but instead we go to the Quartermaster and draw from his storehouse. The clothes are all alike so we do not have as much chance of displaying our taste as you do.

We do not have to wear as much clothing in the daytime in the winter as you do. But when on guard one has to bundle up well as sometimes it is pretty cold along towards morning just before sunrise.

I received a letter from cousin Mary Ferris. She says that Phill has been there but she did not see him.

Do not know that I have written anything that will interest you. Give my best respects to the Johnson children.

I remain as ever your brother,

Lewis

Dear Sister Neil,

I suppose you will want to hear from me by the way of a letter.

My hand trembles so that I cannot write very handsomely. I have had the shakes some, which you at home do not know anything about as you do not have it up there.

Last Sunday forenoon it rained pretty hard and cleared up about noon. It is raining hard today.

We have black walnuts down here. They used to be plentiful before the war broke out but the trees have been cut down.

I suppose that (omitted) is not smart enough to teach Mr. Johnson's and Mosses children. Well, I do not think he could teach them much more "secessh" than their parents already contain.

Well, I hope Miss Fuller will have a good school this winter.

The boys are getting along very well and the company is healthy. I must close.

I remain as ever your brother,
Lewis

Letter #90

Fort Worth, Va., November 24, 1863

Dear Brother Philip,

I suppose you are a little impatient for a reply to your letter. I thought answering all of those letters in one would be a considerable undertaking for me. Then too to manufacture news for all of them and have it passable was more than I could do. So I have delayed your letter until this time hoping that I might think of something new to write about but perhaps I am as bad off as before.

The weather has been stormy. It rained today so we had no drill. That we liked for we had nothing to do but stay in our tents, read, mend our clothing, write, sleep or play whist.

Col. Kellogg has issued an order for all women to leave camp by December 1 or be put outside the lines. It has created some stir and some of the married ladies turned up their noses at it but I guess when the time comes they will pack up and start for home.

Tuesday evening--

The cask has come safely right side up with care. The boots with insoles are all right and without are plenty large. The blanket is just the thing. The boys have been admiring it. Looks are of no account--comfort is what is wanted.

The honey leaked out a little but not enough to do any hurt. Myron's pillow came all right also his boots. The boot grease we are very thankful for. Shall not let it be thrown away.

Give my thanks to Mrs. Merriman for the yeast cakes. Have not tried them yet so cannot tell how good they are. The walnuts are very good.

Goodwin Osborn has received a cask and Chas. Hinsdale a barrel. They will supply the tent with things from home for some time to come. I was not here when they were opened so do not know what they contained.

Tonight I took supper with Andrew Brooker and wife. They had just received a box from home.

Are you going to school this winter? I hope so. Don't see why you stayed at home last winter. I guess that a little more schooling won't hurt you even if I don't ever get any.

I suppose that Miss Fuller will educate those under her charge so that in the spring they will know more than their parents, and throw the district schools in the shade. Well, her pupils are fortunate.

I received a letter from cousin Harley Perkins also his photograph. He writes much about enlisting but I guess he will finally stand the draft. That is what a good many will do, of those who do not go to Europe or Canada and claim to be British subjects.

I hear that Mr. Ives is in New York working on a farm. I also hear that Capt. Bissell is recruiting for the 19th. I thought he ought to recruit his health. I am told that over fifty men were recruited and more are coming all of the time.

I have heard (and perhaps you know) that a silk dress came into Bantam for a certain young miss in the neighborhood of the post

office and that the dress was to be worn on a special occasion. I suppose you know to whom I refer.

I presume that Lewis Hotchkiss is leading a life that molasses could not make sweeter. Well, I suspect he will have to make closer bargains and calculate better if he is to live and shine.

You will not see me home on furlough very soon--not before my three years are up--if you do then--unless the war closes before then.

The talk was that the colonel was to drill us hard this month and give us furloughs next month but I have heard nothing about it of late.

Maj. Hubbard is a pretty good officer--one that the boys all like. He comes in our tent once in a while and is very sociable, not one of your starched stiff men. He can swear like a savage when he gets mad but if the men do what is reasonable he is accommodating. If the men are ugly he is as rough as Col. K.

I suppose Lawrence is going on the same as ever--also Aunt Melissa and cousin Melissa.

What is Dwight Bissell doing this winter and Uncle Amos? Who is keeping horse for them? What has become of Mary? Have not heard anything about her in a long time.

If you were to come down here you could not half fill Ed Pond's place. No man in the regiment can fill it. I suppose Sam Pond is the Great Mogul of Bantam.

I must close for I have written about all the law will allow.

I should like very much to see you or Pa down here but I suppose Pa knows how his pocket will hold out.

Hope this will find you all right.

Yours truly,
Lewis

Letter #91

Fort Worth, Va., November 25, 1863

Dear Brother Sam,

I have not heard from you in a long time but I see that you have finally plucked up enough courage to undertake the great job of writing me a letter.

I suppose you will want to know something about this country and how I like it.

As for the country, if I could live in a house and have my own way, I think I should like it very much better than I do now.

As for farming, one does not have to hurry with the work but can take one's time for it and not be behind half as much as Bill Emmons or John Carter.

If the copper-heads think that the salvation of the country depends upon the next presidential election, I think they will be more disappointed than ever.

The boys are very well. Henry Hotchkiss, Frank Bunnell, and Seth Pond are now as well as ever. I suppose Sam Pond more than fills Ed's place. Wonder if he can smoke yet.

I have not seen Mr. Miner in sometime. Don't know how he is getting along.

The drum has beaten for roll call so I shall have to close.

Goodbye--Write as soon as you can.

Lewis

Letter #92

Fort Worth, Va., November 25, 1863

Dear Sister Alice,

You have been kind to write me so I shall do my best to answer.

I have not much news to write about not as much as you can put in your eye for there is not enough going on to tell of.

I guess we shall have a very good time this year at Thanksgiving.

We have been turving the inside of the fort. It looks very nice. The generals all admire it.

We have to use blank cartridges on battalion drill. The first time the colonel could not do anything with his horse. He had to send him in.

The boys like the fun so long as their cartridges last but when they get home they have a busy time cleaning up.

While I am writing the boys have brought in the breakfast of potatoes, fresh meat and coffee.

Wilson Potter is cooking pancakes and the boys say they are very good. We put in some of Mrs. Merriman's emptyings. I shall have to close for the cakes are waiting for me.

I suppose Ida Johnson will learn a heap at Miss Fuller's school.

Good morning from your affectionate brother.

Lewis

Letter #93

November 25, 1863

Dear Father,

I will try and write you a few lines in answer to the letter I received last.

The cask arrived all safe and sound. I want you to thank Grandma Wright for the warm quilt she put in. The boots with the insoles are just right. I am going to have the soles nailed to prevent wear from the gravel which tells upon boots.

You may send a pillow. Wilson Potter has one made of hen's feathers. One of the same kind would do for me just as well as geese feathers.

You may put in the wrapper that I sent home last spring. I shall not want the new shirts just yet. Perhaps mother will wonder why they hold out so long. I never had any shirts that held together so long or wore so well in my life. They have worn rather thin, but it is not cold yet. The weather is somewhat like October with you.

I do not know how we will keep Thanksgiving but think the colonel will not make any unnecessary work for us to do.

When Aunt Thankful and cousin Frances arrive give my love to them and say that I often think of them.

I guess if the Rev. Judd is happy. If he is not I don't know what will make him happy in this world.

I can get along very well without the stockings until the arrival of the next express wagon.

The next time you see cousin Leonard just remind him that I should like very much to hear from him one of these days.

I must close.

I am feeling very well just now. Have not had the shakes since last Friday. Guess I shall not have anymore of them very soon.

Give my love to mother.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

8 P.M.--

I have been examining the boots and find in the small of the foot the upper leather has been out in three places in trimming the sides. I have sold the boots to Dwight Stone for \$5 and want you to send me another pair. Be careful that no holes are cut in the upper leather.

A pair of sevens will be plenty large. Am not particular about their having double uppers. Heavy calf single will do just as well and a little better.

I would have gotten a half dollar more if it had not been for the cut in the leather.

One reason why I sold them was they were too large with insoles and the cuts were where they could not be stitched as they were close to the soles.

I am not in a great hurry as it is pleasant weather just now and will be for some time. I can wear army shoes just as well as not.

Letter #94

Camp 2nd, Ct. Heavy Artillery,
Fort Worth, Va., December 12, 1863

Dear Brother Phill,

I suppose that by this time you are looking for a letter from me. I shall commence by putting on "2nd Ct. Heavy Artillery."

The boys are putting red trimmings on their uniforms which makes them look pretty gay and niggerish. The officers have their artillery and all of the regiment looks like a turkey gobbler.

Tuesday Wilson Potter and myself went down to the city and boarded one of the Russian ships lying just above Alexandria. We stayed but a short time as they were cleaning the decks. However, we got some idea of her.

She carried thirty-six guns. All would carry thirty-two pound balls. The guns looked like smooth bores and weigh about six thousand pounds. They would make a good deal of thunder if fired by broadside.

After that we went to the water battery just below Alexandria where there is a fifteen inch Dahlgren gun which weighs 49449 pounds. At the largest part it measures a little over twelve feet in circumference.

A daguerrian artist had been there a day or two before. He took a picture of it with the head of one of the men sticking out of the muzzle. A small man can crawl clear to the bottom of the bore.

It is mounted on an iron carriage. The bed is of stone and circular. It takes ten men to work the gun.

If one of the balls should hit one of the Russian ships there would be a crashing of timbers. A few rounds would knock her into a cocked hat.

The ball weighs four hundred and fifty pounds and is round. The bore is smooth, not rifled at all.

Saturday evening--

The Russian fleet have just fired a salute in the dark. We can

see the flashes of their guns. What it is for I am unable to imagine.

The weather has been cloudy and it sprinkled some but has not rained yet but it looks as if we would have a rainy spell.

Col. Kellogg's order for women to leave camp did not scare anyone especially the petticoat tribe. They turned up their noses and said they would like to know how far his power extended the immediate vicinity of the forts.

They thought they could move just out of his reach and stay as long as they pleased. He might issue as many orders as he wanted to for all they cared.

Before the order was put into effect another came allowing two women to each company to be kept on the rolls of the regiment and draw rations the same as the men.

That started off with but one for this company and that was Mrs. Brooker. Now there are about as many women in camp as before the first of December.

Since we have been turned into heavy artillery the women have been useful trimming the coats of the men. Most of them have had their hands full for some time. Guess the colonel does not care to have them go away just now.

Well, I suppose that when you get away from home and at school you will learn the meaning of home, but it will be but a drop in the bucket compared with the soldier's feeling.

We had a very good Thanksgiving supper made up of turkey, chicken, pie, cakes, and oysters. We did not suffer for want of supper that night.

Tuesday night the order came for us to be known hereafter as the 2nd Ct. Heavy Artillery. The boys feel pretty jubilant over it but for all of that we shall have to drill as much as ever in infantry. The colonel has his battalion drills every week.

I am getting so near the end of my paper that I shall have to close. Hope this will find you in good health.

Give my best respects to all the boys and girls and accept this from your brother,

Lewis Bissell
Co. A. 2nd Ct. Heavy Artillery

Letter #95

Camp Co. A. 2nd Ct. Heavy Artillery
Fort Worth, Va., December 12, 1863

Dear Father,

As I have finished a letter to Phill will now try and see if I can do justice to yours. I think I shall fall short.

I suppose you will want to know how I am getting along, how my health is, etc.

Well, my health is very good just now. I was downtown Tuesday and was weighed. I am not very poor at present as I weigh 132½ pounds. That will do for me.

I have not had any shakes very lately. It is now over two weeks since I stopped calling on the doctor. I feel just as well as ever and have an appetite for all that is good and wholesome.

Wednesday evening the chaplain held a prayer meeting in our tent.

There was a tent full--over thirty were present I should think.

The chaplain is a very pleasant man to talk with but not much of a preacher. He has spent most of his time as a tutor in Williams College. After that he was a principal in an academy.

We see but little of him, only on inspection and when the colonel comes around with his staff.

Yesterday about 11 A.M. an order came to fall in, as quickly as possible with our best on and go into the fort as the great Russian Bear would soon be there, from his ships.

There was much dusting and prinking not quite as the belles of New York City do before a great ball.

We fell in and went to the fort on the double quick, marched to the guns and stayed a few minutes. We left a drummer to beat his drum if he saw him coming. As yet he has not come but we are expecting a visit from him before he leaves these waters.

December 15--

It is raining quite hard and looks like a long wet day.

John Bishop has lost his voice once more. He took cold and now is as dumb as ever. He has had poor luck thus far. Has had everything that the company has had and some besides. The captain says that if there is any disease John is sure to have it.

A short time ago the company gave Capt. Wadhams a new sword and belt. The sword cost \$25 and the belt \$6. The scabbard is made of steel and polished so you could use it for a looking glass.

The captain was taken by surprise and did not know what to say or make of it when it was presented.

We expect that Mr. John Hubbard will be around here to make us a visit and see his nephew Maj. Hubbard who is in command of this post.

The boys gave him a sword that cost \$15 and is very nice. He has bought himself a horse. Gave about \$200 for it.

It is said that Maj. Zaoging rode him in his charge at Springfield, Mo. He was purchased off the major when he was in New York City by Lieut. Col. White 1st Conn. Artillery.

I see by the papers that Mr. Hubbard has voted so far--yea, is not afraid to do what is right, is not so bound by party feeling that he can vote only for the good of his party no matter what becomes of the Union.

Monday morning, December 16--

Thomas Beach wanted to know if I was going to have a box. I told him I thought so. His folks are making him some shirts and if they do not send them he wanted the privilege of room in my box.

He said he would write his folks to send them at the first opportunity.

The mail will soon close and I must close also. Please write soon and remember me to all of the family.

I remain as ever your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. The boys are all well. The company is in good health. Wm. Plumb is the only one under the doctor's care in the hospital. Jo Bradley is still acting as nurse.

Letter #96

Co. A. 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery
Fort Worth, Va., December 24, 1863

Dear Father,

Once more I take my pen in hand to answer yours of the 19th which arrived the 22nd.

It found me well as usual but yesterday I had another attack of the ague and had quite a shaky time. So the doctor thought when he came to make his morning visit. With quinine and bone set tea have managed to feel pretty comfortable.

There are but eighteen sick in the hospital. All but one are able to be up and have their clothes on. None are dangerously sick.

In the four companies here at Fort Worth there are but seven who are excused from duty. Some companies do not report any sick.

Saturday, December 19, nineteen recruits arrived from Conn. and one hundred to the 1st Artillery.

They are pretty fair specimens of recruits. All of them were recruited by the Provost Marshal of Conn. We expect more about New Years. When they arrive the boys will have the pleasure of teaching them the drills.

I never thought how awkward new recruits look when they undertake to put on airs like an old soldier until the other day when I saw a squad of them at drill.

What does Mr. Lucious Carter think and say about enlisting and the draft? Should think he might want passage on the underground railway to Canada where many of his brethren drill in the art of avoiding the draft.

Down in the city are men looking for negroes to go north and enlist and fill up the quota. Some of the boys were down in the city and saw them. They felt like blacking their faces and giving them a good booting. If they should come up here and look for niggers, they would soon have a hundred and fifty men after them on the double quick.

The colonel has news from his recruiting officers. I don't know how many recruits they have got so far.

The 1st Conn. have got the start of us in recruiting. They get more men from the state than any other regiment.

The Russian fleet left this morning. They went down the river and fired a salute as they passed the city of Alexandria. Last night the rigging was lighted with lamps or some kind of fireworks. It did look splendid. Some of the lights were over a hundred feet from the decks. They eclipsed all the fireworks I have ever had the pleasure of seeing. We could see them very distinctly--a distance of three miles.

Charley Adams is getting on fine. John Bishop has returned from the hospital and for the first time in five months is on guard today. Guess after this he will manage to get along without the aid of pills and powders of which he has taken his part of all that can make a man sick or well.

What does Uncle "Eve" say about the war? Does he begin to look two ways for Sunday (as the boys say)?

I have been reading the New York Herald. Did not know until today that he (old Bennett) supported Fremont when he was up as a candidate for the presidency. He (old Bennett) knew of Buchanan's weakness.

If old Bennett cannot beat the devil in lying then it is of no use for the Rebs to go any further.

I think the president is doing the best he can for the rebels

but if they will not accept it then let the horrors of war be their punishment. That is about the worst thing they or anyone else can have.

Our Thanksgiving supper came from old Conn. All of it was of first quality. In addition had a gallon of oysters just out of the shells and out of the water. They were good enough for a king to eat or Jeff Davis to want.

The rebellion looks as if it was hard pushed for men and means to find food for its poor starving self.

The morning paper has the death of Gen. Cocoran. Gen. Rufard's funeral in Washington was largely attended--so the papers say.

The weather has been so cold that the boys did not drill this afternoon. All are in their tents making themselves as comfortable as possible. We have good wood. All we have to do is cut it up and put it in the stove.

The new major looks very well in his new uniform and mounted on his horse. The boys like him very well.

The colonel told the chaplain that if he would get the officers to sign the temperance pledge, he would. Most of the line officers signed including Col. Smith and Maj. Hubbard.

Capt. Wadhams is worthy of the sword if any officer ever was. There is not a man in the company but likes him. Hardly a man in the regiment that we would be willing to exchange for him.

Some of the companies were anxious to have their captains resign so they might get him for captain. They would give a month's pay besides.

We like Maj. Smith very well. He is gentlemanly in appearance and a very good officer. He used to punish whiskey awfully and sometimes it got the better of him. I do not think he drinks much if any now.

The last time I saw Mr. Miner he was very well or appeared so to me. His voice is very good. Perhaps he will get along without whispering this winter.

I like the appearance of Mrs. Brooks very much. They used to invite me to supper quite often. I took supper with them just before she left. She is a pretty smart woman and a good school teacher. She can paddle her own canoe while Mr. B. is away in the army.

One of the papers contains an account of the capture of some of John Morgan's men in Kentucky. Morgan escaped in a wagon with two women. It was thought they would be caught before reaching the rebel lines.

I think if you were to build a cell for him he would not get out very soon.

I have received a letter from Uncle Fred and Aunt Maria.

The deserters from the regiment were all from Co. B.

They have been tried by a general court-martial, of which Capt. Wadhams was a member, at Fort Barnard.

One was the drummer of Co. B. He was branded on the hip with the letter D and had his head sheared as close as it could be.

The other was sentenced to the Rip-rap for a year and to lose six months' pay.

There is another one who has not received his sentence. Some of the boys think he was to be shot but that the colonel has asked

the president to pardon the criminal. But we do not know. It is all guess work.

Now about the boots. I am sorry you have been troubled in finding a pair you thought would answer my purpose. As for Phill's boots, I would just as soon have them as any if they will not be too large. Beaches No. seven was pretty large. I wear No. six government shoes. I hardly know what to write you. If Phill's are not too large you may send them along.

The mittens, stockings, pillow, boneset, butter, cheese, etc., if you feel disposed to and as much more as you are of a mind to send, will be thankfully received and thanks returned.

Direct as before except to 2nd Heavy Artillery. But to avoid mistakes, I will give directions:

Lewis Bissell, Co. A. 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery, Alexandria, Va., Care of Peck and Davis

Several boxes are expected tomorrow. As we will have plenty for some time you might send just after the first of Jan.

The boys are expecting to kill one of the company pigs tomorrow and have fresh pork for Christmas.

The pigs weigh about 175 or 200 pounds. They have been fed on swill from the cook house which is pretty good--better than your dishwater swill.

I must close for I have reached the end of my sheet.

I wish you all a happy new year and a merry Christmas but I doubt that this will in time.

I am feeling quite well just now. Don't know how long it will last.

Give my best respects to all friends and wish them a happy new year. Next year I hope to be home and then will do it in person.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. The more you correct my mistakes the more I shall like it.

Letter #97

Co. A. 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery
Fort Worth, Va., December 26, 1863

Dear Brother,

Your letter arrived in due time and now I will try and write some sort of an answer.

The first thing you will want to know is how I am getting along. Well, I am feeling first rate just now. Don't know how long it will last.

There is but little news to write about for there is not much going on. If we were at the front it would be different but here it is the same thing over and over each day and week.

We have been fixing over the inside of our tent and have been about as busy as bees all day.

The recruits have not arrived yet but they are on their way down here.

The boys have been feeling pretty gay of late. Christmas has been celebrated something after the way we do on the Fourth of July up north.

I woke up in the morning and heard negro boys firing guns and fire crackers.

We spent the day here very quietly.

The day before Christmas two boxes arrived, one for Wilson Potter and the other for Robert Watt. One came on Christmas day for Sergeant Hempstead.

About ...P.M. we had supper. Shall I tell you what we had? Well! First a roaster of chicken pie, then a goose, then three chickens, all stuffed, then pie, cakes, walnuts, apples, and a good deal of fun.

We had two captains, Wadhams and Lewis, to eat with us besides two other visitors.

The supper was the best we could wish for. The boys ate so much they could not go to sleep. After we had gone to bed the regimental brass band came around, discoursed martial music for a while. Later they went over to the nigger shanties where a darky party had congregated and were dancing in southern style. The band gave them a few tunes and finally struck up a nigger tune. The spirit moved as well as the darkies. Their heels seemed to start as if by magic.

Perhaps you have not heard of our having a brass band in the regiment. We have a young one which bids fair to be a good one.

There is a story that Capt. Bissell, Col. Wessells, and Brig. Gen. Akins of the Conn. militia were seen by one of our officers at Fort Richardson. That is a story I don't know how true it is. Some of the boys who were in the city thought they saw Porter Mason but were not certain.

I hear that Frank Gilbert thinks hard about enlisting. Wonder if his father will let him.

I guess from what I hear that not many are enlisting. I believe they will have to put the draft through and take all of the able bodied men in town.

Do any of the old copper-heads begin to tremble or are they looking for someone to deliver them?

By your letter I see you are going to school to Mr. Adams. Now I thought that as you stayed at home all last winter, that Pa could afford to let you go to a good school this winter. As for his being too poor, I doubt if his taxes will take all he can make in a year.

Next year you will be twenty-one. Then he will still think he is too poor and that you can pay for your own schooling. I don't see why you did not go to school sooner if you were going at all.

Corp. Cables has received a letter from Will who has re-enlisted as a veteran. All but a few of the old members of his regiment have re-enlisted. Many will go home on furlough about the middle of Feb.

How are they getting along over in the mines? I have not heard anything about it.

Who is the school teacher up in Gilbert district? Perhaps I have been told but have forgotten.

If this reaches you before you have packed the box will you get three boxes of Dr. Cooper's Balm and send it to me. Some of the boys asked me to send for it.

I must close and hope you will excuse all mistakes and accept this from your brother,

Lewis

Direct to 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery instead of 19th C.V.

Dear Father,

It is Sunday and is raining quite hard and as some of the boys have gone to chapel meeting I thought I would write you a letter.

Inspection will not amount to much because of the rain.

There is not much if any news to write about just now. The boys are all well as usual. John Bishop is pretty well just now.

Christmas eve at the chapel was attended by most of the boys. It was well filled, mostly boys from our regiment. The preacher was an Irishman by birth and a smart one too. His text was in Isaiah 9th chapter 6th verse. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a man is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders," etc.

It was the best sermon I have heard since Mr. Richards was here.

Christmas day was celebrated by eating a good supper--the best one could wish for.

I have been reading Pollock's Course of Time most of the morning. Some of the boys have purchased the Prince of the House of David.

The other day a woman came here with a lot of papers and gave them to the largest corporal in the regiment to distribute. He came in here with more than an arm full. They were mostly tracts and old religious papers. I found one that was as old as I am. All of them contained the best of reading and were pretty well read by most of the boys.

Robert Watt receives the Observer as usual every week. The chaplain comes around every Sunday morning with papers and tracts.

The boys would rather go to chapel than go on inspection and have to hear the chaplain out in the air but he wants the colonel to have inspection Sunday and then have divine service. This the boys do not like. They would much rather go to chapel where there is an organ and good seats and a pretty smart man to preach.

Some of the boys have been to see him and find him just the best man they could wish to meet. He is an Episcopalian but not the rigid strict kind that Mr. Wainwright was.

The chaplain holds prayer meeting in the battalion once a week. Last week there was one in Corp. Cables tent. As the tent was full, I did not go.

Will Plumb came over Christmas and stayed most of the day. He is looking pretty well. Is rather fleshy but still weak in the legs. Cannot walk very far.

The chaplain has just been around with papers and temperance tracts.

The colonel has signed the temperance pledge. Lieut. Col. Smith would not sign. Most of the officers have signed, so I've heard.

He was here, the other evening, and wanted to see the non-commissioned officers at the captain's quarters. When they got there he presented them with the pledge. Only three signed; the rest, not unless he would alter it.

The way it read was, "We the non-commissioned officers--following the example of our superior officers, etc." Some thought that if it had been passed around to the privates before going to the officers it would have had more names.

Well, he will be around and call upon the privates, then I

shall see about putting my name down.

I must draw to a close.

I should like very much one of mother's balls of golden butter but we have plenty just now. But I will tell you what I should like and that is a letter from her. Give my love to her and to all the rest of the family, my best respects to all of the neighbors and friends.

If Grandma Wright finishes the shirts before you send the box put them in and leave the wrapper behind.

Your soldier boy,
Lewis

Letter #99

Camp Co. A 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery
Fort Worth, Va., January 1, 1864

Dear Father,

Yours of the 23th reached me on Thursday the 31st.

Yesterday was pretty stormy.

The colonel intended to give the regiment a thorough inspection and muster but the weather was so stormy that the colonel only had the pleasure of mustering us.

I don't know how many there are on the regimental muster rolls.

Yesterday a lot of recruits arrived. I don't know how many.

Our company got ten. Today Corp. Mason arrived with forty-four more for the regiment. We got two of them. One is from Litchfield Depot. One of those who came yesterday was Pat Ryan who lived at Lawrence's one summer. He is now a stout boy of seventeen.

Last night we were awakened by someone yelling loud enough to wake the dead. This morning we learned that one of our recruits, an Irishman, became scared, made out of his tent and ran up the street, in his stockings to the sergeant's tent yelling enough to scare all the Rebs in Virginia.

Some of the recruits are very young, a few are pretty old--too old to make good soldiers and stand the banging of military life.

In two days we have received one hundred and twelve men. Now the regiment numbers eight hundred and sixty-eight not including the recruits on their way here. The forty-four that arrived today were recruited by the provost marshal's agents and were given their choice of regiments.

Corp. Mason represents that if the fifth of January could be put off until the fifth of February we would stand a good chance of filling up to nearly eighteen hundred men. When he left the "Second" was just beginning to be known and recruits were coming in from all parts of the state besides Litchfield County.

Some of the men say we now have one hundred and fifty in Fort Trumbull. It is a good thing for us as it will help lighten our duties. Also it will help fill our numbers so that we will look something as we did when we first came out.

The corporal looked fleshy. He wanted to stay with us as he has seen some pretty rough times this trip. He came here this forenoon and left at twelve for home. Will be in New Haven tomorrow morning. He thinks he will be kept at it all winter or until the conscript business plays out but he is full of pluck.

Some of the recruits thought we were light artillery and drew

that kind of uniforms. When the colonel was told that they were his recruits, he looked at them once or twice and then told them that they would have to shed their uniforms and get some of his fashion.

January 2--

As I was a super-numerary yesterday I was called out of a warm bed at about 12 o'clock. It was bitter cold. The thermometer was down almost to zero.

I have seen the recruits. They looked blue and were doubled up like jack knives. Today the captain had the drummer cut their hair and shave them so that now they look better.

I suppose the folks in Bantam had a very pleasant time Christmas eve. They seem to be pretty patriotic, especially the ladies--the men too, as far as their money goes. We would thank more of them if they enlisted and shouldered a musket. I think some of them would come if they could have commissions but there are enough of that kind in the army now.

Yesterday four trains of soldiers passed through Alexandria on their way home. All of them had re-enlisted as veterans. They seemed to be in good spirits, judging by the noise they made.

We are watching the doings of the rebel congress. Some of its senators are preparing clubs with which to pound themselves. If they keep on they will have the wrath of Jeff Davis poured upon them. Then there will be music. Chord and dischord will be the harmony of the occasion.

I guess the Rebs are beginning to look two ways for Sunday and another way to escape if the Confederacy collapses like a bladder as it will some fine day while the sky still appears clear.

We have plenty of butter or will have when our box arrives. I do not care to sell butter down here to make money. Neither is it the safest kind of an investment although Conn. butter will sell very readily at 40 cents per pound and over. But I do not wish to sell butter to the boys to make money out of them. Perhaps Myron will try it and see if he can make money. When we get out the boys will send, by me, for your surplus and pay a good price for it. They will give more for Conn. butter, because it comes from home.

One of the tent squad, William Plumb, was here this afternoon. He is looking pretty well for him. He is the only one now reported on the sick rolls of the company.

He does not know whether or not he will get his discharge. Thinks the doctor intends to keep him and see what he can make of him.

I heard today that Geo. Franklin, Mrs. Richards' son, had enlisted and is to come to this company. Guess he will have to toe the mark down here.

The boys are feeling very happy and full of fun tonight.

I suppose you and mother feel a trifle older now that you have become great aunt and uncle, as well as Grandma and Grandpa Wright.

I suppose you know of the old saying that more boys than girls are born in time of war. I don't see that is true for there has been quite a number of girls born since the war broke out. Good Osborn's among the rest.

I don't want you and mother to trouble yourselves about me not having enough clothing to keep me comfortable. When I need any from home I shall let you know.

Myron and I have a straw bed to sleep on. We got the tick down in the city. We get along first rate.

Sunday afternoon--

We have had a company inspection today. As the weather is quite cool the colonel did not get the regiment out.

The chaplain has been around the boys say that he leaves his tracts behind him. He had a bundle of them which he distributed among the tents.

The chaplain holds a meeting this evening at Fort Williams. Also there is to be a prayer meeting at the Seminary.

Our chaplain holds prayer meetings at each of the forts once a week, sometimes in one tent sometimes in another.

I suppose you will see Goodwin Osborn and he will, of course, tell you all about me. Well, he will not exaggerate very much but will give a good account of matters and things down here.

As for me getting a furlough I think I shall not see home very soon. One has to have some urgent business that requires the personal attention of the applicant at home. Unless you can find some urgent business or can make up some I shall not see home this winter and perhaps not until my three years are over and I shall come home for good.

Corp. Cables told me that he wrote you sometime last week but you did not mention having received it. The corporal wishes me to send his love and best wishes to you. He has thought of applying for a furlough to go home but has not done it yet.

The boys are sitting around the tent, most of them reading, five of us writing.

Three of the recruits have gone to the hospital, sick. One of them is playing sick or is good for nothing. The doctors are thinking of giving him his discharge.

I must close.

Please excuse all mistakes.

Give my love to all the folks and family.

I remain as ever your son,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #100

Fort Worth, Va., January 10, 1864

Dear Father,

Having finished a letter to Phill will start one to you even if it is Sunday. I have not found time to write before today but guess I am no worse off than Phill. Sunday is the only time a good many soldiers have in which to write and that they might improve. So you must excuse me if I set Phill a bad example.

We welcomed Good Osborn to our tent on Friday and Mr. Williams on Saturday. He is well and will be a permanent tent mate.

There is a good deal of stir in camp fixing up for the newcomers. In a few days more tents will be going up. About half of the faces we see are new and more are on the road.

Myron received a letter stating that our box was on the road. We expect it sometime this week.

We have watched the papers for sometime past and have made calculations about the Confederate treasury.

We think their money is about as good as so much paper. One of the rebels taken prisoner by Sedgwick said that their money was worth as much here as in Richmond. I think by next winter they will see harder times than ever.

Their cavalry will play out if they do not get horses outside of the Confederacy.

Well, the sooner they are run ashore the better. But I am no political talker so shall have to dry up.

We are having an easy time just now. Do not have to go on guard but once in eight days. Do not have to drill any. Have drilled but one hour and one dress parade in two weeks.

The recruits do not have to go on guard duty. Nothing but drill while we stand and look on. To see them perform is sometimes quite amusing.

There has been a good deal of snow for this place and it has hung on quite a long time. The cold weather has nearly closed the Potomac. Only one boat a day from Washington and that in the middle of the day.

Sleighs have been running in Alexandria and Washington but there is no snow enough for them to run well. They rub on the ground some.

This forenoon Mr. Minor made a short call. He is looking very healthy; that is the way with the old men.

The recruits are filling up the hospital. Most of the beds are occupied.

I suppose you have heard all about the death of Dr. Huxbey so I shall not tell you. The son that is sick is expected to live but a short time. He thinks he will recover.

I think I shall have to stop for a time.

Sunday evening--

The evening is quite pleasant. We had dress parade for the first time in nearly a fortnight and to our surprise Col. Wessells was here. We thought he had gone home for he said he would go to his home the next day.

Most of our tent squad are going to the evening meeting at the chapel.

We are expecting to see Mr. Bradley down here one of these days.

Most of our recruits have hard colds and sore throats, although but one or two of ours are sick as yet.

Thus far we have received about the best and healthiest men that have come into the regiment. Today's squad was not quite so good as those received before.

The colonel has called a council of officers to see about recruiting a band. The leader and six of the Wheeler and Wilson band will enlist if the colonel will promise to give them \$13 extra a month. I do not know what they will do about it but hope they will get them to come and then get the rest from the regiment.

Phill writes that Lucious Carter is not enrolled for the draft. If I should come home I would not go out of my way to see him.

I wish you could see the old members of the regiment hold up their heads and make themselves perfectly at home.

I must close.

Give my love to mother and tell her to write. Give my love to all of the family and friends.

From your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #101

Fort Worth, Va., January 16, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you will want to know how the box arrived and when. Well, it reached here yesterday the 15th, right side up with care and everything inside all right.

The doughnuts and pies are very good, have not been injured by traveling. The butter is first rate, good enough for anyone to eat. The cheese is good, could not ask for better. The dried apples and nuts will come in play among the boys. We have eaten some of Myron's and some of mine. The boys pronounce them first quality.

I slept on the pillow last night. It seemed like home to me as I have made my pillow of my knapsack.

As for the boots, guess I have seen them before. I was in hopes that my feet had grown some so as to fill the boots. But when I pulled them on thought that Phill had a foot as large as an elephant. I can almost kick them from my feet. However, I think I can put insoles in and navigate through the mud. The toes are all of three quarters of an inch longer than necessary but guess they will wear well.

The shirts I have not put on yet so cannot tell how they are, but from the looks think I shall like them.

The Dr.'s balm arrived all right as did the rest of the herbs.

The "New Gospel of Peace" we read sometime ago and should like to see the second edition. It is out.

The tracts and papers were received and have been read by most of the men.

The boys from the other tents come in now and then and from the captain down say there is no place like Litchfield for good things. It seems as if they knew what soldiers want.

Myron dipped into the Latin grammar in the evening with all the eagerness of former days.

The stockings are all right. Tom Beach's shirts are on his back. The sausage was not hurt.

Please thank Aunt Julia for the doughnuts and also tell her I should like to hear from her by a letter. Also thank Uncle Ev. for me and the tent for all will have a taste.

The news from here is about the same, nothing much new that I am aware of.

We have about forty-two recruits in our company. Most of them are goodlooking men and will make good soldiers. A few are pretty old and some look as if they ought to be at home under Father's Thumb instead of down here among rough men. But on the whole, they are about (if not) the best lot in the regiment.

Most of them will behave themselves and what won't the captain will handle. If he cannot he has his old men to fall back on, then things will have to come.

The non-commissioned officers have plenty of drilling to do just now. Each one has a squad of men to work on.

Later the captain will take them and then will come the tug of war. Every man has to look out for himself and obey orders. If they do not the captain will be after them with a sharp stick and then look out raw recruit.

The old men have nothing to do but look on, go on guard and dress parade. The rest of the time we do nothing except laugh at the awkward recruits drill.

One of our recruits was sent to the hospital. His name is Gunn. He has brain fever and is quite sick.

The hospital is beginning to fill up with recruits.

Yesterday we were inspected by Lieut. Col. White of the 1st Artillery, division inspector. This took all day in the mud as the old gentleman was in no hurry, never is.

I suppose you will see some of the 8th Regiment up your way pretty soon as we hear they are on the road home.

I guess I have written all that is of any interest to you.

Shall send by Watson Potter \$15 of my month's pay. Had I been certain of being paid at this time, I should have sent my state order home. Will send more before long.

I must close.

I am a thousand times thankful for the box.

Give my love to all the family.

Yours truly,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #102

Fort Worth, Va., January 25, 1864

Dear Brother Phill,

And now I do suppose you will want to hear from me. Well, I am as healthy and well as ever for all I know. Have grown fleshy since I stopped shaking.

The recruits are getting along very well although most of them have hard colds. They are not allowed to grow lazy as the captain drills them four hours a day.

Today the old men had an artillery drill in the forenoon and in the afternoon the whole company was out under the captain. The old men were mixed up with the new men to keep them straight and in their places.

Sunday morning the colonel had the regiment out to look at. He wanted to see the faces of his new men. He did not stop to look at the old men.

After we returned our company had a reenforcement of twenty-two men. At first roll call two of them were missing and did not appear until this evening. They came around to the 1st sergeant's tent and reported. When asked why they were absent said they got lost and were afraid to come back in the day time for fear of being taken up by an officer. I don't know if the captain will believe their story.

Tom Hulburt is serving his country tied up at the wheel. He has been punished more than any man in the regiment.

The old boys have been trading muskets with the men. Some get as much as \$10 to boot between a polished and a bronzed musket. I think when I can get about \$10 I shall trade.

We are now the largest company in the regiment and I suppose the captain will be making a few more non-commissioned officers.

We are crowded for room. Most of our tents have from twenty to twenty-five men. The captain says we will have to stand edgewise.

Almon Bradley is getting along very well. He has been about sick with a cold.

Some of the men say that Grape Vine Point and Fort Trumbull are about the two worst places men can be put in.

They are down on both the men and the officers especially the negro troops that guard them.

This evening the boys are having what I should call a stag dance in the barracks which are partly finished. Three or four fiddles are scraping away while a lot of Uncle Sam's brogans are scraping the floor.

Mr. Charles Vaill and Lady made us a call on Saturday afternoon and seemed glad to see us.

As far as you having such heavy whiskers guess you had better send some of them down here for some of the boys who are trying to start mustaches and whiskers.

I think that when they get the proposed railroad through Litchfield and Bantam then they will have a seminary in full blast besides all kinds of education factories. Then, perhaps, Pa will want to send you to school and have you educated for an orator or some great public position of honor and trust.

I suppose you will see Mr. Ed Pond up your way one of these days full of life and patriotic fire. He thinks he shall have a furlough one of these days. Then the girls will have plenty of escorts for he will be a host in himself. The boys call him "General Pond."

We have twenty men in our tent and are a little crowded. When all are in there is not much room left for hoops. If any were so unfortunate as to get in they would soon be crushed and squeezed into a small space.

Since I commenced writing Sergt. Hempstead has just come in from Washington. Says he heard the Hon. John Hubbard say "No" when a vote was taken to lay on the table a bill increasing the soldier's pay. The bill was not laid on the table for many voted against it. Among them was Ben Wood of New York.

The weather is quite warm for this time of the year and place.

Our new recruits are quite busy scouring their muskets. Some of the recruits have long faces when they look at their muskets and compare them with the polished ones of the old men.

I suppose there is a good deal of talk about building the proposed railroad. Well, when they get it through, I shall come on it and jump off in front of the house.

I must close. Hope this will do.

From your soldier brother,
Lewis

Letter #103

Fort Worth, Va., January 28, 1864

Dear Mother,

I guess you are beginning to look for a letter from me about this time. I should have written before but we are so crowded that we have hardly room in which to write. When we do try someone will joggle ones elbow and drive the pen into the paper. Or someone will ask a few questions and a mistake is the result. Well that is the soldier's luck and one ought not to complain.

Co. A. now numbers one hundred and forty-seven enlisted men. When all are out they make a long line. Tonight at dress parade there were one hundred men in the ranks. It begins to look as it did when we left Camp Dutton.

As yet none of our recruits have gone to the hospital and are getting along very well. Some have hard colds which makes them sick.

Some of the recruits have been trading muskets and giving from \$3 to \$15 for one that is polished. I have one that I would not exchange for a bronzed one and \$15 to boot. Perhaps one of these days someone will be foolish enough to give me \$15 between mine and a new one.

It is nothing but scouring. Some will work for a while and then get sick of it and go and trade for one that is polished.

It is evening and there is a grand officers ball in the new barracks. The band and a brigade of fiddlers are to furnish the music.

The band has just begun to play and the feet begun to shuffle on the floor.

The privates are to stay in their tents. The dance will last until midnight while we poor fellows who wish to sleep will be kept awake. The major told the boys that if they would make no disturbance they might dance all night tomorrow night if they chose to. But it makes the boys mad just the same. It makes no difference to me as I never went to one so don't feel offended.

The weather is very warm for this time of the year. It begins to look like something else than a January thaw. The men puff and blow when drilling on the double quick.

Yesterday afternoon we had a battalion drill. There were about one thousand men on drill. The colonel kept us at it for an hour and a half without stopping. It was the hardest drill we have had in a year. There were so many new recruits in the ranks who knew hardly nothing about marching. They would push and crowd the old men and that made the old fellows almost mad. After the drill came dress parade.

The day before at about noon the four companies at this fort received orders to put on their best clothes as the colonel was coming to the fort and bringing some visitors with him.

Well, we did as ordered and was kept there over an hour or more. The visitors were a daughter of Secretary Welles and a niece of Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania. Col. K's wife and Secretary Welles' wife are related.

Friday morning--

Last night the dance was somewhat interrupted by red pepper which had been thrown upon the floor by some miserable hound. Col. K. says if anyone will show him the man that did it, he will promote the informer and thrash the miscreant.

I expect that Capt. W. will promote some of his men before long for there are to be twelve corporals and eight sergeants. Some of the sergeants will be commissioned.

The story is that the people of Bridgeport have offered to form the 11th and 12th companies and want to officer them and have one major. The colonel does not want the officers but he would like the men. He says he has privates who made the regiment what it is and they ought to be rewarded by promotion. They are worthy and to commission civilians would be an insult to these men.

I hear that Arthur Catlins bride fainted and is quite sick. Guess Cupid's dart was poor on that line.

I suppose that when the old soldiers get home match making will be the order of the times. The old ladies can put their heads together, make calculations and see how they come out.

As for Martha Merriman, if Will Cables is around, she will have to look more than two ways for Sunday. A good many others will be in the same fix.

I suppose Martha Cables has changed her name and will set up an establishment of her own.

The box afforded us a good many pleasant moments especially at meal time when the butter and other things came into use.

The boys praise the pies very much and I think them as good as can be made.

I must bring this letter to a close. I think by the time you get to the end you will think I have written a great plenty.

Please give my love to the aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Please write as often as you can.

From your loving son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #104

Fort Worth, Va., February 2, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you will not object to having a letter from me at about this time with all the news of interest from this vicinity.

At dress parade tonight an order was read forbidding the men gambling. If found gambling they are to be put under arrest and charges preferred against them. I suppose he (the colonel) will punish them.

The next best thing he can do is to stop having inspection on Sundays. Then he would please us very much and besides would be obeying the regulations. We would thank him very much. When he does that it will be the cap sheaf.

In the paper I see that the president has issued a proclamation calling for five hundred thousand more men or a draft will follow before the first of March.

Well, if that is the story the 2nd Conn. will be filled to eighteen hundred men in a short time. There are now on the road from New Haven about one hundred men besides there are a good many at Fort Trumbull who have not started.

We received a letter from Geo. W. Mason saying that we have recruits coming in there at the rate of one hundred a week.

The 11th and 12th companies will be filled up and formed here instead of up there and will be officered here.

The weather has been quite warm for some time back with a prospect of little change for some time to come.

Last night one of our recruits went to the hospital with lung fever. There are a few cases of mumps. Before the winter is over there will be thirty cases more. The small pox has been raging in Alexandria and Washington so the doctors have been vaccinating the recruits.

Most of the recruits in our company are very good men. Some are hard cases but they will have to come under.

One of our recruits says he has been through the Mexican War

and that he has been a sailor and that he has five discharge papers. According to the regulations in the Regular Army for each ten years of service a veterans stripe or chevron is allowed and in this war a man that re-enlists is entitled to one. This morning he came out with six chevrons on each arm.

The boys are making some sport of him.

The majority of the recruits are new men who have never been out. A few are veterans. One has been in the cavalry for something over a year.

The boys say he made application to the 1st sergeant for a corporals position in this company. That is the way the new men look upon such things.

This afternoon we had a company drill. The old men got into the front rank so as to help the recruits straight.

The Richmond papers are very gloomy over the prospects of the coming spring campaign and the consequences.

Perhaps you have read the remark of a prisoner at Chattanooga after the battle. It was that if the Confederacy kept growing smaller the Yankees would have to use cannon of smaller caliber to keep from shooting across and hitting their own men on the other side.

I do not know what the Rebs will say and think when they hear of the president's last call for volunteers.

I see that the New York Herald has given up trying to run Gen. Grant for the presidency. I guess they will have to yield to Honest Abe.

I think Gen. Grant is one of the most sensible generals in the service. He will not let himself be influenced or allow any one to make speeches in his behalf or pull any political wires for the presidential chair so long as Abe Lincoln is able to handle the helm of state for another term of four years.

In one of Lee's addresses to his army he says that as men and patriots they must endure hardships and privations like their fathers in the Revolution. But, says he, we will come out all right in the end.

The package you sent by Robert Watt arrived safely. I am under great obligations to you for the book you sent at the same time. I have read it. The boys in the tent will read it and pass it on to others in the company.

The drum has just beaten for roll call so I shall have to close soon.

I knew William Davis very well. Have seen him almost every time I have been to Fort Scott.

Mr. Williams is getting along very well, better than most of the recruits. Having been out before he knows better how to take care of himself than those who have not.

I shall enclose \$15 of Conn. money and think if I don't come home shall send some more but it is not likely I shall. Still if there is any chance I shall improve it.

Tuesday morning--

The weather has turned cold and blustering which makes some of the recruits look blue and shiver.

Co. E. has had six new recruits desert since they came here. More would do the same thing if they could and not be caught.

One man in Co. B has deserted the second time. The officers think they will catch him for he is not smart enough to keep out

of the way. If caught he will be shot without mercy or ceremony.
I must wind up this letter as I have written all the news
that is of any interest.

Hoping I shall hear from some of you before long I remain

Yours affectionately,

Lewis

Letter #105

Fort Worth, Va., February 8, 1864

Dear Father,

Your letter arrived on Saturday and remains unanswered.

I have just finished dinner of pork, bread, butter, and beans
with spring water to wash it down. We are living very well for
soldiers.

One of the companies has moved into the new barracks and we
have their tents. We have thinned out our tent from twenty to
fourteen men.

Among the new comers in our tent are Williams and Hitchcock
from Naugatuck, Bennet from Trumbull and James Osborn from Warren.
The latter lives in the neighborhood of "Daddy" Stone.

In general the recruits are not as smart a set of men as the
old company. They are not as well educated nor as good all around
as the men of the old company. But still they are as good a set of
men as one could expect coming as they do from all parts of the state.

As yet none of them have got into the guard house nor have any
deserted. Some companies have lost quite a number by desertion.

A letter from New York City came to one of them after he had
left. The colonel opened it and found that it was from one of his
companions in New York.

They had club rooms. A gang of them would enlist and come
down here. They would be followed by an agent or have one here who
would furnish them with clothes.

Back they would go, jump another bounty, come out again and
again desert.

One man, a recruit in Co. K. was arrested last night. It was
found that he had deserted from another regiment and enlisted in
this regiment.

According to the Articles of War death is the penalty.

Tuesday evening--

The colonel has ordered three drills a day which makes five
and one half hours. This is because of the recruits.

Monday one hundred and two recruits for Co. L. arrived. They
have not been organized into a company as yet.

In Co. A. we have one more lieutenant Daniel Marsh formerly
1st sergeant of Co. H. He is from New Milford.

The captain has sent in a list of names for promotion. The
boys are amusing themselves by making their own promotions. Every-
one makes a list of the lucky ones but never includes his own names.

An order has been issued that one man from each company is to
go home on conscription business the same as George Mason is now
on. They know who is going from all the companies but A and they
are in the dark about that.

Last Saturday a couple of citizens made their appearance at
the captain's quarters. The captain looked at them two or three

times and finally made them out to be his brothers, the twins. They made a short visit and left this morning for home. They seemed much pleased with their visit and wished to stay with us.

I suppose the captain will go home on a furlough before long.

Chas. Merriman arrived today from Litchfield. Robert Watt left for the hospital Saturday. He is laid up with inflammatory rheumatism, but is getting better.

Only one recruit from our company is in the hospital. Our sick list is the smallest of any company at this post.

By today's papers I see that the nation can rejoice as the Army of the Potomac is in motion. The rejoicing will be of short duration as they have returned to their old camp grounds.

Everything looks favorable for us in the coming spring campaign. I hope it will continue to until the Rebs are whipped.

Col. Kellogg wants to get away from here, as soon as the new men have been drilled sufficiently, and go into the field sometime in the spring. I have my doubts about it.

The regiment now numbers sixteen hundred and thirty men.

We expect to see Theodore Vaill wearing shoulder straps, one of these days, with the rank of first lieutenant. I do not expect he will come to this company.

I think I have written so much nonsense that I shall have to jump from this sheet of paper to another and scribble away on that.

I have no old blouse just now but think I can get a couple of new ones before long. I will send them by express or by some of the boys who are going on furloughs. Will see what I can do about it.

We draw clothing the first of every month. If you had written a week earlier, I could have gotten them right away.

The government price is one dollar and twenty-five cents. But no matter about that. I had an old one last fall but drew another one and put the old one inside of the new one for winter use. This makes them quite comfortable. They are not as good quality as we drew when we first came out.

We have a company pig which belongs to the old men. They are going to sell it and divide the money.

Some of the boys have hard colds although none are sick with them.

Saturday afternoon we had the pleasure of shaking hands with the Hon. John Hubbard and his lady. They seemed glad to see us.

Well, we all can look on Mr. H. as a soldier's friend and one who is willing to do all he can for the soldiers without first looking to his political party for guidance.

Mr. H. inquired for all of the Litchfield boys and shook hands with all of the old boys of the company, no matter whether he had ever seen them before or not.

Then M.C. promised to come again when the governor comes to see the regiment which he promised Mr. H. he would do before long. The colonel is putting the new men right through for the governor to see.

Perhaps this is rather dry reading for you so will try my pen at something else.

The chaplain is one of the best men that I have come across in Virginia. He was educated at the same institution just before the war broke out.

While I am writing Myron, Wilson, Charley Adams and Jones have

got the Jubilee out and are singing by the same candles I am using.

They make it go very well. All that is wanted is some female voices to make perfect harmony. It carries me back to the Milton singing school under Mr. Hart.

The weather is not very cold, something like March with you, not much rain.

The drum has just beaten for roll call so shall have to bid you all goodnight.

Please remember me to all of the friends and neighbors who inquire after me. Tell them I am growing fat and saucy towards Copperheads.

Give my love to mother and all of the fraternity and excuse all mistakes.

From your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #106

Fort Worth, Va., February 18, 1864

Dear Father,

Once more with pen in hand I write to you for the seventieth or eightieth time.

The weather for the past few days has been quite cold, so cold that the men cannot do anything but sit by the stove and put on wood.

Uncle Sam furnishes us with plenty of good wood all seasoned. It is oak, pine and maple and is cut by the negroes into four foot lengths.

One of the new barracks is finished and Co. E has moved into it.

Last week Thursday the 1st and 2nd Conn. Artillery were reviewed by Governor Buckingham and Brig. Gen. Barry. The day was quite chilly and the men suffered considerably from cold hands and feet due to standing still and holding their muskets.

The men marched very well. The captain put his old men in the front rank so as to keep the recruits in their places. Some of the lookers-on said that the 2nd Conn. marched the best. There were about twenty-five hundred men under arms.

Sunday the colonel had an inspection but as the day was very windy the colonel made it very short. The chaplain wanted to preach but because of the wind the colonel sent the men home.

Saturday one of the recruits of Co. M. died very suddenly of a disease of the heart. The body was taken to the hospital where the doctors dissected it and found the heart filled with blood. The body was buried in the soldiers burying ground in Alexandria.

Dr. Hazzard while dissecting the body cut himself slightly. Now his arm is swollen up to his shoulder. They fear he will not live. If he does, he will have to lose his arm for that will have to come off.

Quite a large number of new recruits have the mumps and measles. They caught them coming down here. Some are getting along very well. The hospital is full to overflowing mostly with new men.

Saturday night at dress parade a long list of promotions of non-commissioned officers was read. In Co. A. were the following, some you know and some you don't know.

Corporals G. W. Mason, Chas. Hinsdale and Ferris Pond were promoted to sergeants. Privates Chas. Adams, Russell Curtis, Apollos C. Morse, Wilson Potter, E.G. Osborn, Albert A. Jones and Dwight Stone were promoted to corporals. "They will be okayed and respected according" by Col. Kellogg.

Three of our sergeants are to get shoulder straps. They are Sergeants Kilbourn, Hempstead, and Hatch. Theodore Vaill is to be a 1st lieutenant and will be adjutant.

Our company officers will be Capt. Wadhams, Lieuts. Potter, Camp, March and Wheeler.

The governor had a long interview with Col. K. about commissioning new officers from this regiment for he has had applications and recommendations from citizens for commissions in this regiment.

The colonel told the Governor that he did not want any officers who would not come without enlisting. He had men enough in the regiment to fill all vacancies and would have officers who knew their business.

I suppose Capt. Wadhams is at home enjoying himself. I think that if any man has earned his furlough he has earned his.

Lieut. Potter is in command of the company.

Last Monday two of our recruits left and have not been heard of since. They are set down as deserters. If caught, I hope they will suffer the penalty.

I see by the Washington papers that a deserter from Co. E. is in the old Capitol Prison. I would not give much for his life if he gets back here and is tried. Not much sympathy will be shown him.

I hear that Mr. Merriman has hurt himself and it is doubtful if he will live.

About blind Monson. I forgot to write in my last letter that the skins we use to polish our muskets are called chamois. The name comes from a small Alpine animal. But these we use are nothing but sheep or some other skins. Leonard or Monson can tell you all about them.

I doubt if there is a deer in the state of Virginia. Guess if there were any our army would thin them out very suddenly.

I received a letter from Uncle Fred and one from cousin Francis Smith. Uncle Fred says they have plenty of wild game around there.

I suppose you have read the proclamation of Jeff Davis and noticed that he does not mention their losses at Vicksburg, Port Hudson, Look-out Mountain and Gettysburg. Also that he thinks the war will end in less than a year for the Yanks will get tired of war.

Well, I think that by time there will be but little territory to fight over if we take as much the next year as we have the last.

But I must close.

Please remember me to all relatives and friends.

Yours, etc.

Lewis Bissell

Dear Twins,

As it is ten minutes past eight in the evening and as I have been writing to Pa thought I would write you a few lines just before the drum beats for roll call.

We have to answer to our names at half past eight and be

in bed before nine when lights are put out and all talking must be stopped for the night.

I think it would be a good thing for little girls sometimes when they won't go to bed until late at night.

We have some dogs down here but they are small. They catch rats and live around the fort and camp.

But I must say goodbye.

Lewis

Letter # 107

Fort Worth, Va., February 21, 1864

Dear Aunt,

Agreeable to promise I feel in duty bound to answer your very interesting and welcome letter which arrived in due time.

I will try my best to write an interesting letter as I have received.

It is Sunday evening and is warm and pleasant out of doors. The weather seems more like May than February. Last Friday was the coldest day we have had this winter.

We have not had a very hard day's work. In the afternoon an order came for a regimental dress parade, so over we went.

The whole regiment was out recruits and all. The two new companies L and M have not been organized yet nor have their officers been appointed. They have not been furnished with arms.

In the line there were twelve hundred men which is more than we had when we left Litchfield.

A good many recruits take it into their heads to go off on their own hook so the guard house has plenty of occupants as also has the bomb-proof.

Two of our company "cut stick," took "French" leave and have been set down as deserters. Yesterday Dwight Kilbourn was down in Alexandria and went into one of the eating houses. He found one of the deserters at work bottling soda. Dwight had him put in the slave pen and today fetched him up to stay in the bomb-proof for a while.

One of Co. B's deserters is in Forest Hall prison. He was taken up in Ohio. This is his second desertion. His military career probably will end with a bullet. There is hardly a man in the regiment who will object to seeing him shot.

The camp is very quiet this evening. A good many men have gone to the chapel to prayer meeting.

The chaplain holds prayer meeting once a week at each fort. He also comes around every Sunday and leaves his tracts behind him wherever he goes.

I suppose that Capt. Wadhams is up there among the hills of old Connecticut. Well, he has earned his furlough if any officer has. We expect to see him down here Tuesday.

There is not much news of interest to write about. Where troops are stationed in forts, as we are, nothing of interest transpires.

Some of the recruits have the mumps, two or three cases of measles and a good many hard colds.

Mrs. Pond's Edwin is, I suppose, cutting a wide swath. He tried to do the same here but it did not work. When he hears that the captain has not promoted him to be a corporal guess he will be

down in the mouth (but you need not say anything about it).

The troops around Washington are leaving for Texas and other places along the coast. Their places are taken by the Invalid Corps. Now there are but few troops about Washington except artillery. There are not over thirteen thousand men in the 22nd Army Corps.

We are looking for active regiments all around this active rebel nest.

I hope Jeff Davis will not sleep in peace until the rebellion is crushed and then I hope he sleeps in prison. He ought never to be allowed to walk the earth again as a free man.

All of the Bantam boys are well. Seth Pond has a sore throat but is getting better. Will Plumb is at work in the hospital. He is looking very well and his health is very much better than he ever expected it to be.

Give my love to grandpa and grandma and Charley. Tell them I should like to hear from them.

Do not think that others write all the news for they are sure to leave out something of interest now and then.

I hope you will excuse all mistakes and allow me the pleasure of reading another of your interesting letters.

Please remember me to all of the aunts and uncles who inquire after me. Tell them I am well, fat, and patriotic.

From your affectionate nephew,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #108

Fort Worth, Va., February 25, 1864

Dear Father,

Dress parade and supper being over will proceed to the next most important business, that of answering your letter which reached Ft. W. Tuesday this week.

I received a letter from Aunt North yesterday saying she had been unwell and that Uncle's health was very poor. Also I received a letter from Uncle Fred saying that they were all well as usual.

You need not trouble yourself about me being made a corporal. There is plenty of timber in the company from which to make "non commishes" besides me. If I had been in some companies I could have been a sergeant before this but I would not exchange companies for a half dozen sergeants.

Three of our sergeants will be commissioned and then as many privates will jump up a peg higher than they have been for the past eighteen months.

I have just been to see Serg. Hatch and Corp. Spencer who have just arrived from home.

All of the recruiting squads are back. They left at Fort Trumbull one hundred and forty recruits who will be sent on.

This will make the regiment number over nineteen hundred men if anymore do not desert. Over eighty have "cut stick" and left without asking anyone, some without saying goodbye to anyone.

I suppose you will hear or have heard that we are or were going to Texas.

Col. Kellogg has been to Washington to see about our leaving here. He did not see Gen. Barry and came back without having

accomplished his object.

If anything will get us away this desertion of recruits will do it. The colonel has been heard to say that if he stayed here five months longer he would have left only the old originals and they would stick through thick and thin.

Capt. Wadhams and Mrs. Wadhams arrived Tuesday afternoon. A coach with a negro driver drove up to the captain's door and out stepped the captain, then handed out a lady which afterwards proved to be his "new rib" as he called his bride. He has not yet introduced her to the company but I suppose you know her as well as I do and perhaps better.

I guess she is not very lazy for the next day she commenced a vigorous attack on the captain's quarters. Had his nig at work on the double quick.

Ed Pond cut quite a swath through the street tonight but I did not see him to speak with. Some of the boys turned out of his path so as to let him have full swing.

The weather is very warm and mild. Some of the farmers have commenced their spring work by plowing. There has not been a month since I have been here that you could not plow or dig stone or lay a well (if there were any stones). There are plenty of small ones about as large as a goose egg and round. They are used to cobble roads and paths.

If we stay here this spring and summer, I shall get home but if the government gives bounties to those who re-enlist think I shall embrace the opportunity. Then I could come home on a thirty day furlough.

If the rebellion plays out as fast as it has in the last year I should not have to stay my time out would save a year and get in five years \$800 or \$900 in bounties besides my wages and state bounties. What say you to it?

I have heard nothing about the pledge in some time. Perhaps the chaplain will be around in a few days.

There are plenty who ought to sign it. I saw one man brought home tonight, dead drunk. The guard house and bomb-proof are the lodging place for such men when under the influence of liquor.

As to Capt. Wadhams, you guessed about right. He is a man of few words but is, at the proper time, approachable by all who wish to see him on business.

He will grant a good many favors if the man will behave and do his duty to the best of his ability. He often comes into the tents, sits down among his men and makes himself one of them. Sometimes if you could see him you would take him to be anyone but Capt. W.

In a great many regiments the custom for officers when they go visiting is to have the bottle passed around but that custom is practiced little if any in this regiment.

There have been a few cases of intoxication in the company as any company in the regiment. One instance I will relate.

One of the men had a pass and went to the city. The same day the captain sent in his application for a furlough. In the evening the captain was going to the colonel's when he met this man coming home drunk. The captain said nothing but stopped the furlough so by getting drunk he had the pleasure of staying in Dixie a while longer.

I should like to see Albert Flowers and Hodge Wedge down here dancing to the tune of double quick for an hour at a time besides a good many other little performances which can be purchased and learned without paying a cent.

We hope to hear soon of the fall of Mobile into the hands of Gen. Sherman.

I suppose you have all been electrified by the arrival of Amos Kilbourn and the reports of many a bloody battle.

As to the heathen deity Molock and dancing schools of Milton, I think I should choose the ancient to the modern. But after all it may be six of one and a half dozen of the other.

If Phill has taken to making music on a fife he ought to come down here and hear our fifers play. There are ten of them and as many drums. They use silver fifes and make things ring. There is to be one more drummer and one more fifer added to each company.

The recruiting squad brought with them the leader and three of four of Wheeler and Wilson's brass band. They are to organize a band as the colonel is great on martial music.

The drum has just beaten for roll call so I shall have to close. Please remember me to all the friends. Give my love to all the family and excuse all my mistakes.

Lewis

Letter #109

Fort Worth, Va., March 1, 1864

Dear Father,

As the day is rainy the boys are all under canvass making themselves as comfortable as they choose. I have spent the day scouring my musket and the other numerous things that belong to a soldier's outfit, all of which have to be looked after and well taken care of.

Yesterday was muster day and all were busy especially the adjutant and colonel who have to see every man. Perhaps some would think it all nonsense for so much ceremony to be gone through with but the government requires it.

There is not much news to write about just now.

Some of the bounty jumpers leave now and then for parts unknown. Yesterday one of our officers went down to the city and found three deserters and the men who furnished them with citizen's clothes.

If those who furnish the clothes could be found and arrested, it would stop a good many desertions.

I do not know how many have been arrested. We read in the paper of the desertions and the arrests. It is pretty hard getting away without being caught sooner or later.

The weather along back has been very dry. The stumps and woods around here have been burnt over. Thousands of acres have been burnt over. In the evening the flames have made the sky quite light.

Wm. Plumb has returned to the company and is going to try and do duty. He has grown quite fleshy--looks well and healthy. I don't think he can stand it but I hope he will.

Our recruits are quite well and healthy. We have none in the hospital sick from our company.

We now turn out the largest company in the regiment. Besides we have more than any company detailed on extra duty. When a man is wanted for special duty, they are apt to come to our company for him.

I think that Capt. Wadhams cares but little, if any, for promotion, not half as much as some of the captains who are not half as fitted for a major's position. He will not ask for it nor ask anyone to get it for him. When he leaves this company, it will be to go home. If all of our officers were like Capt. W., there would not be half as many men in the guard house.

Our muster rolls will show the best of any in the regiment. Only two deserters one of whom has been caught so we have only one deserter. Other companies show from 5 to 15.

Whether it is because those that come into this company did not intend to desert or because of the way the captain uses them has kept them from deserting, I do not know.

I have heard some of the recruits in other companies say that a man who would desert from Co. A and use its captain so mean ought to be shot when found.

The captain's wife says that she likes living down here very well so far. I called upon the captain the other day and he introduced me to her. She called on us one Sunday with the captain and wanted to know if ours was the "Happy Family" tent. She had heard a good deal about it and its members.

Mr. and Mrs. McNeil left for Washington yesterday and will leave there for home tomorrow. I think they enjoyed their visit very much. If they did not we were glad to see them and enjoyed their company.

The way the colonel shows off is by putting the old men in the front rank and the new ones in the rear. The difference in the marching of the old men and the new is very great. One who is used to seeing both well drilled troops and recruits can tell them apart by the way they march. Old men march very firm and steady while new ones do not.

Old men do not like to drill with recruits but prefer to drill by themselves for it is much easier. New men crowd and jamb about just as if our ribs were made of iron and could stand as much banging as the Monitor.

I suppose your neighborhood will be filled with big stories of daring and deeds of bravery of Amos Kilbourn.

Lieut. Potter has just come in and has set down to play a game of whist with the boys.

Soon we will have a good many new shoulder straps. Theodore Vaill among them. He has gone up the fastest of any man in the regiment from a private to a first lieutenant. The colonel will not part with him for any other two lieutenants in the regiment. The colonel could hardly get along without him now.

Adjutant Deming is not here as adjutant but is here on a visit. He came into our tent and shook hands all around with the old men most of whom he knew.

The colonel offered him any office below a major that he wanted. I do not know of anything more that has transpired down here to write about and think I shall have to call a halt.

Remember me to all the family and friends.

Yours as ever,

Lewis Bissell

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Letter #110

Fort Worth, Va., March 7, 1864

Dear Brother,

Perhaps you are a little huffy because I have not written to you before this. Well, I am glad I did not. Pa arrived here yesterday afternoon accompanied by Messrs. Hull and Beach.

I knew nothing of Pa's coming. When they came I was sitting on my bunk polishing my musket. In came Mr. Hull who began to shake hands with the boys. I looked up and there Pa stood in the door.

At first I could not believe my eyes but you may guess I was not long in getting down from my bunk and shaking hands with them all.

Pa stayed with me in our tent. Is here now while I am writing for it is raining quite hard out of doors so I keep him indoors. Mr. Hull is here enjoying himself.

They do not think of stopping very long but I want Pa to stay long enough to see what sort of a place we live in.

There is not much news to write about.

I suppose you have heard of Theodore Vaill being promoted to first lieutenant and adjutant.

The colonel is going to have a splendid band of music before long. They have seventeen men in it and will soon have the machine going full force. "Music hath charms to soothe the savage" but I doubt if it will quell the rebellion any sooner.

I hope you can spare father for a while. I can keep him down here just as well as not and have plenty of rations to feed him.

Perhaps I am growing forgetful but guess not anymore than you when you forget for a short space of time that I am waiting for a letter from you.

Pa came at the right time for I am detailed as a marker and do not have to drill so I can spend all of the time with him.

Bill Hull is as much pleased with his father's arrival as I am with mine.

Yesterday I was thinking I would go to the captain and apply for a furlough. Perhaps I shall come home after all.

The boys at headquarters say that they have seen an order to the effect that furloughs are to be fifteen days after this and that five were to go at a time until the fifteenth of April. This is a camp story and you must take it for what it is worth and not for the truth.

We are as well as usual and hope to be.

I don't know that I can write any news but when Pa gets home he can tell you more than I can write in a month and better too. So I guess I shall have to dry up.

I suppose you are boss over all hands and can play Dad to the small ones while the old rooster is gone.

But I must close.

From your brother,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #111

Fort Worth, Va., March 10, 1864

Dear Sister Cornelia,

I suppose you feel a little disappointed in not getting a letter from Pa but I am writing an answer for him.

The day your letter arrived he was in New York so you see your letter arrived two days too late for him to read. He will answer it in person.

There is not much news for me to write about.

We have to send twenty-five men up to Fort Ward to work on it. The government is going to make it larger so when finished it will cover five acres of ground and hold two thousand men.

Since we were paid a good many men go off and get drunk. When they come back they have to be tied up to the wheel for five or six hours at a time.

The boys say they heard firing in the direction of the Army of the Potomac.

I must close and say goodnight.

From your brother,
Lewis

Dear Father,

I shall send my money home when I write the next time. I dislike sending it at this time for the reason it is known that we have been paid and someone might dig in. So I shall send it next week.

Yesterday twenty-five men were detailed from each company in the regiment to work on Fort Ward. It is to be enlarged, will cover five acres of ground and have two bomb-proofs which will hold a thousand men each. There will be three magazines. As we understand it, it is to be a permanent thing after this war is over.

All of the boys send their best respects.

From your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #112

Fort Worth, Va., March 15, 1864

Dear Mother,

I received the letter you wrote Pa and me last night, also received one from cousin Mary Ferris.

I got a pass to go to Washington with him on Monday. When I got back found the letters to welcome me. So I shall have both of them to answer.

We got to Washington about noon and went to the hotel and had dinner. Then set out to see the city.

First, we went to the Smithsonian Institute from there to the Patent Office and then to the Capitol where we saw the Hon. John Hubbard for a few minutes. He seemed to be very busy most of the time.

We went into the galleries of the Representatives and Senate and saw how Congress makes the laws of the land.

But I shall not undertake to tell or describe anything I saw for when Pa gets home he can tell you better than I can and in better style so you can understand it.

I guess I was enough for Pa and Mr. Beach before night.

I took the ferry boat at 6 P.M. for Alexandria. Reached Fort Worth between 7 and 8 in the evening. I was pretty well tired out by my day's journeying and slept like a log.

While I was gone the paymaster made his appearance with plenty

of money for the boys. It took him from morning until...to pay the men off.

There was some music among those who love the bottle. Some were marched to the guard house to sleep it off.

The men are out drilling as usual this afternoon.

It is snowing now and then with plenty of wind.

I hope Pa will get home safe. I suppose you will see him before this reaches you. Then you will hear all the particulars.

The Smithsonian Institute beats all I have ever seen for nature study. There you will find all kinds of birds, mammals, insects, snakes, and a thousand and one other things also the Stanley gallery of paintings.

There is a large park of fifty or sixty acres around the Institute with carriage roads and walks in every direction. It is set out with trees of almost every kind that will grow in this climate.

The boys all seemed glad to see Pa and wanted him to stay longer. When I got back they all wanted to know if he had come with me. When I said "No" they said they were sorry.

I suppose Phill is boss and servant for all hands while Pa is away. I wonder if he will get homesick before he gets back. It will be a wonder if he does not after staying away so long.

Tell Pa I sold the watch for \$15 and got the money for it this forenoon. The boys all took a fancy to it, it was such a curiosity in the watch line.

I must close give my love to all and accept this from your affectionate son.

Lewis

Dear Brother Francis,

As you have been so kind as to write me a letter, it is with pleasure I take my pen in hand to write an answer. I am afraid this will not be a very good answer.

I suppose that when Pa gets home he will tell you all the news and more than I can write.

Yours and mother's letters arrived yesterday after we had gone to Washington. So he will not have the pleasure of reading them. I found them when I got back from Washington.

We saw some of the public buildings and the Capitol. Also we saw Mr. John Hubbard in the Capitol. Pa will tell you all about him so I shall turn to something else and what shall it be?

I do not know how many of the deserters have been caught. Two, one from our company, have got away. They were in the bomb-proof. Some friends furnished them with tools with which they cut around the staple got it loose, opened the door and got out. They have not been heard of since.

But I must close. Give my best respects to all the friends and neighbors and any time you find time write me a letter.

Give my love to all of the family.

From your affectionate brother,
Lewis Bissell

Dear Brother Phill,

I suppose that to keep my end up with you I shall have to answer your letter. It reached me yesterday the 16th along with some for Pa.

I don't know about answering all of them. If I do think I shall have done my part if not more.

There is not very much news to write about.

Ever since pay day there has been plenty of heavy artillery drill by those who go down town without leave and get drunk. When they come home they are made to carry a heavy stick of timber or be tied up to the wheel for six to eight and ten hours for a day or two.

The other day two went away. When they came back, the major took a limber wheel from the axle tree and tied one to each side. They had to hold it up for if it fell with them one would be somewhat hurt.

Most of our recruits got from \$40 to \$50 bounty besides their wages so most of them feel rather liberal and are not particular about small change.

Last night and this morning there were under guard about twenty-two men all from companies B, H, and E (none from A). All but two or three were recruits. The old men say the recruits are going into the heavy artillery in full force.

You can tell Pa that one of the men who dug out of the bomb-proof has been arrested. He was found in the neighborhood of Mount Vernon. Our bird Harris has not been heard from. Also tell him that the man (Gibbins) the captain had tied to the wheel has applied for a transfer to the navy. So if we get rid of him we will soon have less blowing.

We have received an order to commence target practice with heavy artillery, five shots a day to each company. Wednesdays and Fridays until further orders. We commence tomorrow with mortars.

About 1 A.M. Thursday morning we received orders from the captain to get up, put on our clothes, and get our arms ready to fall out for old Mosby was reported not far off.

Well, we did so. Some of the new men thought that the Rebs would be here for certain. Others wanted to know if they should put on their dress coats and scales. Others wanted to know if they should load their muskets.

When they saw the old men put on their clothes and then go back to bed and to sleep as if nothing had happened they concluded there was not so much danger as they thought. They followed our example and soon the camp was quiet again.

There is an order that all the roads around here be blockaded so as to prevent a body of cavalry approaching the lines.

If the Rebs had come that night they might have had a warmer reception than they expected for there were about fifteen hundred of Kilpatrick's men near Alexandria. They would have jumped at the chance of having a chase after old Mosby's gang.

The boys are making preparations for firing the mortars tomorrow. They are ten inch and will jar things especially the dishes in the cupboard. A blast is not much compared to the mortars when they go off.

If you want to know what I was doing when Pa came he will tell you for he is home by this time.

As for me getting a furlough, I think it next to impossible. No doubt the captain would give me one as soon as anyone if I had urgent business home or if any were sick but we down here must await the movements of military strategy.

I assure you I want to come home as much if not more than you want me to. I would come if possible but can't.

I cannot think of any more to write about so shall have to dry up.

Give my best respects to all who inquire after me. Give my love to all friends, etc.

From your affectionate brother,

Lewis

P.S. As it is now Saturday evening and I have not mailed this letter will put on a little more. There is nothing new except a detail of twenty-five men from each company in the regiment are to work on Fort Ward. It is to cover five acres of ground. The work will take six months.

In my next I will send some money to father. Don't like to just now for it is not considered safe just after pay day. Fear of mail robbers.

Letter #114

Fort Worth, Va., March, 1864

Dear Brother Sam,

As you have been so kind as to write me a letter and as I have been writing Phill will commence one to you. I don't know when I shall finish it as it is now evening and pretty near roll call so I may have to stop short off.

Pa has, no doubt, got home before this and so of course he will have enough to keep you listening for a week to come.

We are going to practice firing the mortars at targets tomorrow. We have some new ones, just received from the foundry. They will throw a shot two miles. The shot is as large as you can lift if not larger. You could easily put your head into the muzzle.

Tell Pa that when I got home from Washington, I found a letter from cousin Mary Ferris besides one from mother.

I should like to know who is the man you speak of in the 2nd Conn. Artillery. I should like to make his acquaintance. Wish you would inform me.

The drum has beaten for roll call and I guess I must say goodnight.

From your soldier brother,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #115

Fort Worth, Va., March 24, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you are looking for a letter from me at about this time or will be before it arrives.

Well, I should have written before this but we have begun to have more busy times.

Every three days our company goes on fatigue up at Fort Ward. Besides that we have to practice at target firing every Tuesday and

Friday. Also we have to furnish a picket guard. All of this keeps the men a little busier than when you were here.

Tuesday evening it began to snow. Kept it up until morning when the snow lay knee deep around the tents. We went to work and cleaned the streets. Yesterday and today the men have been getting it out of fort so that we could get around when firing.

I wish you could see the ten-inch mortars when they are fired. They jump from one end of the platform to the other and about six inches high. They make everything around here jingle and would do more so if we were to put in a full charge. As yet we have used but half charge. The extreme range is three miles. As yet we have fired only half that distance.

Capt. Wadhams put a barrel on a pole almost down to the railroad tracks. Out of five shots one fell within a few feet of the barrel. If the shell had had a full bursting charge it would have blown the barrel to atoms.

While I am writing Lieut. Potter has come in. He and the boys are at their favorite game.

Good Osborne has come over from the colonel's and is making himself at home as usual.

We do not miss Bill Hall one bit as yet. Don't know but we may someday but that day will not come very soon.

I must tell you Good Osborne's last joke about the chaplain which was pretty sharp.

He (Good) says that the chaplain came into the office one afternoon and threw a roll of greenbacks on the table saying, "there is my forenoon's work. I went over to Co. L and found the men playing poker. They asked me to sit down and take a hand. I thought I would show them I knew how and I took 'the rag off the bush' every time. I came away with my pockets pretty well lined."

The joke of it is that last evening Theodore was in here and the chaplain came in. "Theo" told of it right before him. He joined in the laugh and said that Co. L was pretty well played out and guessed that he would not have as good luck next time.

John Bishop has come in to say that I may tell you that he is all right, feels well and sends his best respects. Silas Griswold has the black measles and is up at the Fairfax Seminary. He is quiet sick, so some of the boys say, who have been to see him.

Our new recruit is about well. He goes out to drill along with the best of the men. Myron is down a little now with a sick headache and pain in his side but I think he will get over it in a day or two.

There is a story around that from ten to fifteen voters from each company are going home to vote. Wish I was one of the number but think my chances are rather slim. Wish they were better. But there is no use crying over what one can't help.

There are just thirty old men who have not been home on furlough.

The drum has beaten for roll call so I must stop for the present if not for all night.

I would have sent some money home before this but I hoped either some of the men or myself would be going home by the first of April.

One of the deserters that escaped with our bird Harris and a corporal from Co. H have been arrested and are now handcuffed

and in the bomb-proof with a guard at each door.

When they are fed the non-commissioned officers of the guard must feed them.

But I must close. Give my love to all the family and best respects to all friends and neighbors.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #116

Fort Worth, Va., April 2, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you have been looking for a letter from me or myself in person. Well, I have often thought we should come home but the time for us to come and go has gone by. No signs of furloughs have appeared so I shall have to send a letter in place of myself much as I and three hundred others wished to come home.

The weather is very much as it was the day that you and I and Uncle Hull went up to Forts Richardson and Scott.

The old tent leaks in the same place and the boys are occupied very much the same.

The Chronical has come. In it I saw a small paragraph about a Mrs. Bissell who has been confined in the Capitol prison for smuggling letters south. She and another one of the same stamp are to be sent south.

It seems that her husband has been in charge of a navy yard in California. I do not know where to locate her or to understand how her husband is in government employ.

One of our men, Luther Pratt, who lived in Americus, Georgia told me that not far from that place lived a man of our name. He owned a plantation and had several children. But I cannot make head or tail out of it.

There is not much news to write about just now. We have to do the usual drilling and go on fatigue every third day. They are laying out a good deal of work for us to do.

The colonel has the regiment out to drill now and then. Every Friday and Tuesday we have target practice. The last hundred pounder has hit the target once and one of the siege guns has hit the bulls-eye once.

Capt. Wadhams has used the mortars. One of the shells came within a few feet of the barrel which is white washed.

The captain's wife is making herself quite at home. He has cut a door out of the back side of the house and has put up a tent for her to cook in as they intend to keep house.

Myron has not been very well of late. Orson Buell told him that if he did not feel better he ought to go to the hospital so the next day, Tuesday, he went. I have been over to see him. He is in Theodore Sanford's room. S. was here yesterday and said that he was some better, could sit up and write.

As you have seen the hospital, you can tell his people all about it. He will have the best of care. I would go and see him today but the doctor does not like the men to come in stormy weather so I have not seen him.

I suppose you have heard all sorts of rumors about the 1st Conn. leaving here. If you have not, we have. Some of the men think it is true.

Silas Griswold will come home on a furlough as soon as he is well enough to leave. He is in the Fairfax hospital and will get his furlough there.

The last straw that broke the camel's back was put on Monday night. An order came from the Secretary of War for three recruits, one of them a corporal, to go home on furlough. When the boys heard of that, they just got up their dignity and protested against it long and loud. When they remembered the eighteen months they had been out and then saw these men who but a few weeks ago had their pockets lined with large bounties, and who could stay away but a few weeks, the men were a little stirred.

I for one felt a little stirred just about that time but it did no good.

A day or two after we learned that the Secretary of War had disapproved of our going home just at this time as very likely we would be under marching orders before we would get home.

I have heard that Wm. Hall has said that if his father said the word from ten to twenty men could go home on furloughs. But I think his old Dad with all of his Masonic influence will not get us home do what he may. If his word would fetch us wish he would rip it out as Col. Kellogg would say.

If it is necessary I can stay seventeen months more but then I would like to see the man that would say I could not go home.

But you must not think I am homesick by the way I write--far from it. As it is near roll call, I must stop for the night.

Saturday evening--

I have not mailed this letter as I ought to for you will be looking for it long before it arrives. But I must answer Cornelia's letter also or a long face will be the consequence.

There is not much news of importance to write about at this time.

Some prisoners at Fort Ellsworth dug out of the bomb-proof last night and made their escape. The night was very dark and stormy.

The 15th N.Y. Artillery at Fort Lyon is leaving for the Army of the Potomac or elsewhere today.

Corp. Wilson Potter and a private in Co. E took the man in the guard house, who was arrested for being found asleep at his post, up to Washington today. Where he is to go, I do not know.

Tomorrow we are to have another patriotic Sunday. It is to be kept by having a brigade review up on the parade nor of us. This by command of Col. Abbott, darn him.

Col. Kellogg has presented Theodore with a splendid sword, so the boys say. I have not seen it.

Our wood choppers came in last night. I have for good.

The boys are getting along the same as usual.

As some of the men are coming home to vote I shall send money home by them. They will go in a few days.

The boys all send their best respects.

From your son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #117

Fort Worth, Va., April 9, 1864

Dear Brother,

I suppose for some time you have been looking for a letter from me but I guess you will have to look until it comes. I should have answered before this if--well it's no use to make excuses.

We have just had a company inspection this afternoon. We have just come off and I thought I would answer your letter.

We have had a rain storm for the last twenty-four hours. The boys on guard said it did not rain down. It fell down almost solid.

There is not much news to write about just now only that we have not left here nor are we likely to this summer.

One of our company who is the adjutant generals clerk at Arlington says that one regiment will leave for the front but it will not be the 1st or 2nd Conn.

A good many troops are going on the cars out to the Potomac army. Yesterday a regiment of cavalry passed by here going out to Fairfax Court House. It is thought that the Army of the Potomac numbers over one hundred and fifty thousand men.

I suppose Gen. Grant goes by here every few days. If we knew what train he was on we could send a shot from the fort which would put a stop to his going and coming just when he pleases, perhaps kill him.

The work at Fort Ward goes on rather slowly. Guess the boys do not work hard enough to hurt themselves.

About thirty men are detailed out of our company. They do not do duty in it or drill with it. Besides there are the sick, so instead of having one hundred and thirty men out for drill we have eighty or ninety. Those on guard will make eight or ten more.

Guess if Pa were here now he would think we had enough to do to keep busy. The men have to go on guard every ten days, dig every third day and drill the rest of the time. We have no lazy moments except on rainy days. The colonel gets the regiment out on battalion drill almost every day in the week.

Tell mother I have plenty of clothes. Tell Pa I got a blouse the day after I got back from Washington. You are welcome to the old one he carried home.

If I have an opportunity shall send my old shirts home before long. Have used them for wrappers all winter.

All of the old men are well. George W. Mason arrived last week, Tuesday, rather tired out.

I will transfer my letter to another sheet.

From what I hear think Uncle Eve has finally got another chance to go to the legislature this spring. Was in hopes he would have the pleasure of staying at home along with O.S. Seymour. There ought to have been at least five soldiers from our regiment home to vote so as to have got Ed "Seemore" out of office.

As for me getting a furlough home this spring think that it is out of the question. Even if I did, I should not trouble Mr. Seely in the least nor his "gal" for I do not lay any claims to her nor she to me. I guess if she wants to marry a stay at home man she can have him but I don't want any such women about me. I don't admire her judgment one bit. Do you?

As The. Vaill says, "I suppose that all those miserable hounds who stay at home, that have no more courage than a chicken, who do all they can to encourage others to enlist, but stay at home themselves, are marrying all of the smartest girls up there and leave

the soldier boys with out any or with the poorest quality." There you have Theodore's opinion on the subject.

What progress does Mr. S. make? Do you think he is pretty well received? Hope he is.

I suppose that if you don't hold any correspondence with anyone by letter, you do in person, which is, no doubt, pleasanter for all parties concerned, yourself in particular.

Well, I don't know at I ought to write so much to you for fear of making you blush clear above your whiskers.

I suppose you will be looking around this summer for a farm for if I mistake not you are of age, can speak for yourself, be your own boss and make your own selections without consent of Dad or Mom.

I think there is no doubt but I shall stay away from home two years at least. I think but don't know that furloughs will stop by the fifteenth of this month. I hope not. If they continue all summer I may possibly come home by the eleventh of August next. Nineteen months of our time will be out tomorrow. Guess we shall see at least two years service within sight of the Capitol dome.

A good many of the old men want to go to the front but the new men do not.

I must dry up.

My love for all the family and friends. My best respects to all the neighbors.

Please excuse all mistakes and let me hear from you soon.

From your affectionate brother,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #118

Fort Worth, Va., April 24, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you have been and still are looking for a letter from me. Well, I should have written before but I could not find time. The evenings are getting so short one can have hardly time before the drum will beat for roll call which they will not postpone for anyone.

Sergeant Pond is, I suppose, home on a furlough. He left here last week Sunday morning. I was on guard at the time and did not know he had got a furlough until after he had left.

If I had only known it should have sent \$18 by him. But since there found that I could invest it safely at pretty good interest and did so.

Next Saturday we will be mustered for pay and very likely shall get it about the twelfth or fifteenth. With my state order of \$10 will then send about \$45 or more home by express or some other means.

Today we have had another patriotic Sunday. The brigade has been reviewed by Gen. DeRussy.

The two companies of the 1st Conn. Band M that have been out with the Army of the Potomac came in Saturday. Co. M. is up at Fort Ward, B at Fort Richardson. The men are madder than a nest of hornets because they had to come back. They liked it so much better out there than in here.

There is not much news to write about just now.

Peach trees have been in blossom all the past week. Dandelions were seen more than a week ago although I have not been out to look

for any.

St. John has been here this forenoon. Came back with a few flowers he found in the woods.

I was down in Alexandria and met Mrs. Mary Sam in one of the stores. She was looking pretty well for her. Did not say when she would go home. I saw her but a moment.

I saw Mr. Miner the other day. He was getting along very well and looked well and healthy.

None of our regiment are very sick. There are about four or five in the hospital. Myron is gaining slowly. He looks rather thin and pale but I think will come out bright in a few days.

I suppose you have heard that furloughs have played out. None will be granted after the fifteenth of this month so you see I shall have the pleasure of staying away from home two years at least before I can get away from here.

There is no very great danger of our leaving here this year.

The men are stretched out at full length in their bunks, some reading, others wandering around in dreamland or the Land of Nod.

Mrs. Kate Lyons is here. Lyons has built a house for the ordinance sergeant and when we leave here he is to have it. Kate has everything fixed up in apple pie order.

The corporal in Co. B who had felons on his fingers is some better. He comes over from the hospital every day.

I suppose Joseph Bradley has reached home on furlough before this. Perhaps you have seen him. I did not know he had gone until a day or two after he got his furlough from the hospital.

Eben Oakes arrived here Friday morning.

There seems to be a movement going on in the Army of the Potomac. About a hundred sick and lame were brought up to Fairfax Seminary hospital. Saturday ten regiments took the cars at Alexandria for the front. We could see them on every train that went out.

A few Rebs were captured down by Cloud's Mills a short distance from here. It is just beyond one of the targets. They were captured by some cavalry scouts.

I must close as it is almost time for dress parade. Then comes the grand tug of war and flourish of bright steel and brass.

Tuesday afternoon--

I have just come off guard. It has been storming for the last twenty-four hours and appears likely to continue.

Yesterday afternoon Geo. W. Mason arrived bag and baggage from New Haven. Today he is fixing up his traps.

Yesterday I received yours and Phillip's letters of April 1 and must leave them unanswered for the present.

I suppose a good many were disappointed in not seeing the soldiers come on Saturday and Monday.

Since I commenced writing the mail has come and brought a letter from Uncle Erastus dated March 31. It does not give very much news, only that he has the rheumatism so that he does but little work.

The men were somewhat disappointed in not going home. But the straw that broke the camel's back was put on in the shape of three furloughs from the War Department for three of our new recruits to go home and be gone until the seventh of March and none of the old men could go until they came back.

Myron came back from the hospital yesterday. The doctor was

going to put him at work there so he told him that if he was well enough to work there he would come back to the company which he did.

I don't know who will go home next but if it is someone I can send money by, I shall do it.

The Q.M. Sergeant of Co. H has deserted taking a large sum of money with him. He went to Alexandria one day and the boys of the company sent by him some \$600 besides a gold watch worth over \$100 to express home for them. That was the last they saw of him.

I must close. Give my love to all of the family.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

April 25, 1864--

Col. Abbott leaves next week for New York City to engineer the defenses of the harbor--so dame rumor says.

Troops have been going out today also a good many trains for forage.

The box arrived safely a week ago and was all right.

Please remember me to the Marches and Co. for the maple sugar. Tell them that in my judgment and that of others, just the best ever made.

The butter is very good indeed. The big cheese we have not cut yet so cannot tell how good it is.

The handkerchiefs are now in active use doing full duty in attending to the needs of my probosis.

The pickles were praised by all who tasted them. The horse-radish was very good indeed. It went well on the potatoes and salt horse.

If mother thinks I am poorly off for clothes, you can tell her that if we should have to march, I have more than two men could carry with them.

The day has been quite warm. It made the recruits sweat some on drill.

Apple trees have leafed out as have many other trees. Grass is getting up so that it is very good feed. Have seen some cattle out and some old horses, belonging to negroes. The horses look as if they needed something to hold them together.

A man died in the hospital yesterday. I do not know to what company he belonged.

Another deserter was brought in yesterday.

I have heard that Col. Smith has sent in his resignation. He got up one night and went off down north of the city and was found the next morning in the camp of the 5th N.Y. He had a fit of delirium tremens.

I have seen him once since then. His face was not quite so red as before. He has lost the respect of his men so the best thing he can do is go home.

The evenings are so short that there is not time after dress parade to go to the chapel and get back before roll call.

The chaplain has not been over here in some time to hold prayer meeting.

The brass band is improving rapidly. They can play better than any other band I ever heard in Conn.

But I must draw this to a finis.

Please give my love to all the family and relatives. My best respects to all the friends and neighbors and accept these few lines from

Your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell
Co. A. 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery

Letter #119

Fort Worth, Va., May 3, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you have been looking for a letter from me. Well, you will have this just as soon as the mail can carry it to you.

I am enjoying the best of health. I don't know that I am growing fleshy but guess I am growing lazy more than anything else.

We have been mustered for two months pay. The pay master has been here and told the officers to get the pay rolls in just as soon as possible. If they did we would be paid this week. I hope we will.

The elventh of this month the state bounty becomes due. I shall try and send my money along with that of someone else, by express. It is safer sending money here than from here north.

The news is not of great importance. There has been some excitement here caused by the deserters in the bomb-proof. There are thirteen. They had been supplied with a key with which they took off their hand-cuffs. Then some kind friend helped them to a shovel and pick and a few other things.

With jack knives they cut off the end of a floor board, three inches thick. Then they commenced digging out towards the ditch. They put the dirt in between the planking and the siding that kept the dirt back.

They placed a man at each door to keep watch. If anyone came the others came out, put on their shackles and appeared as if nothing had happened.

They had dug to within three or four feet of the outside when one of them turned "states evidence" and let the secret out.

First he asked for a pen and paper and write a statement of what was going on. Col. Kellogg was sent for. He went to Capt. Wadhams got a revolver and then went down there.

They were desperately excited, almost to madness. If they could they would have murdered the first man that came in their way.

They had to take out the man who let the cat out of the bag or they would have murdered him in less time than it takes to tell it.

They had dug a passage large enough for man to crawl on his hands and knees. Our men filled it up with stone.

The prisoners were stripped of all their clothing which was examined. Then they dressed and had their hands handcuffed behind them.

But enough of this.

I am acting as a marker, again so have a little more leisure time. I don't have to drill or do much of anything.

I guess by the look of things that the Army of the Potomac is about to cross the Rappahannock for I saw a train of cars loaded with pontoons.

All disabled soldiers are being sent back to Alexandria. A good many came in today.

John Bishop was down in the city and saw a man just back from there who told him that so large an army had never before been got

together in Virginia.

Dame rumor say that at the Washington arsenal they are loading heavy guns for a siege train which will be sent down the river towards Richmond.

Our officers are, as well as those of the 1st Conn., thinking that one of the two Connecticut regiments will leave here before next July.

I suppose that before this time Henry Hotchkiss has made his appearance in your midst, on a sick furlough. How does Bill Hull get along? Have not heard from or about him since he left. I wonder if he thinks of coming back or will he try to get in some hospital or keep getting his furlough extended all summer.

As for Good Osborne I see but little of him. He comes over once in a while. Theodore is here very often. He tells of Good's jokes and sells on the chaplain and others who are not smart enough to watch out for him.

The chaplain lectured at Fort William on "Man." The band was there and played, "Old Hundred" besides other acceptable tunes.

Last Sunday the old colonel did not have inspection because he had been out the night before. We had one here in the afternoon which gave the men the privilege of attending chapel.

Tell mother I have cut the cheese and all the boys pronounce it excellent.

I shall send home about \$40 besides my state bounty.

Give my love to all the family and friends.

I remain as ever yours affectionately,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #120

Fort Worth, Va., May 5, 1864

Dear Brother,

And now another letter must I write you. Well, here it is.

I don't know of much of anything in the shape of news for that is a rather scarce article around here. There are plenty of camp rumors afloat but they are worse than old women's stories.

Myron does not get well very fast, the boys and I think. But, the doctor says he is able to be around the tent and wait on himself. He looks poor and pale and has but little appetite. If possible, the officers are going to get a furlough for him but they have some doubt about it.

That is the way you must expect me home, not until I arrive which will not be this summer or next fall.

Cousin Kate Lyons has a small house with two rooms. She has as good a house as any of the officers. When they leave it the ordinance sergeant takes it.

Ladies are plentiful around here, officers wives, besides a good many wives of the men. If we should leave here there would be a scattering of petticoats.

There is a Pennsylvania regiment of Heavy Artillery down in the city. They have been ordered to the front as infantry. The officers have rebelled against the order and the governor has protested so they remain.

Several regiments of heavy artillery have been sent to the front. Most of them have come from Baltimore and New York City.

We are more fortunate than they.

We had one desert from our company last week. He left at the time Burnside's Corps marched by here. Some of our men say he saw some officers who knew him. He left for fear they would find out where he was. The officers think he is a deserter from some other regiment and left for fear of being taken for desertion.

Thursday morning--

Yesterday afternoon we had to put on our fine clothes, go into the fort and show off our artillery. We were inspected by Brig. Generals Howe and DeRussy.

The generals thought we drilled very well.

Lieut. Potter has come for me to go on an errand over to headquarters so I shall not be able to finish this letter in time for the morning's mail.

Thursday afternoon--

Have just come from a brigade drill and review by Generals Howe and DeRussy. The generals were an hour behind time and kept us waiting for a long time. Finally, they came and we had a review and drill then came home none the worse for it.

Dame rumor has any quantity of rumors afloat. The Washington and Alexandria papers have it that the 2nd C.V. Artillery went down the river on the morning of the third with siege trains, bound for the peninsula, but we don't see it yet.

Last night a good many sick were brought in from the front. Railroad men report the army in motion. A good many soldiers went out this morning, mostly recruits. A boat load of veteran reserves from New York City went out a few mornings ago.

The trees are all leafed out, flowers are in full bloom and the darkies are making gardens. They fence up a little patch and with an old horse that looks as if it had once been owned by Bill Dudley, a one handle plow, an old harness and a clothes line for reins, turn up the sacred soil of Virginia to raise something to eat and clothe the young darkies.

But I must begin to draw this newsless letter to a close--right off.

How does Lawrence get along? Have not heard about him in some time. According to Ed's account Mr. and Mrs. Pond are very lonesome because of Sam going west. Does Mr. Merriman's house receive its visitor Sunday night as usual or has the mitten been flung at him? But I guess not.

Hoping I shall hear from you soon I close by saying that I shall have to dry up.

From your affectionate brother,

Lewis

2nd C.V.A. Fort Worth, Va., May 5

Friday--

Mr. Eli Perkins arrived here yesterday, stayed with Tom Beach.

Letter #121

Fort Worth, Va., May 11, 1864

Dear Father,

I have thought of writing you before this late date but we have been unusually busy for a week past.

I suppose you have heard before this about the 1st Conn. going

away from here and all sorts of rumors about both regiments leaving.

We are all well as usual, none in our company are very sick. We have but three in the hospital and they are not so sick but that they can get around. I don't know how many there are in the hospital at the present time.

Lieut. Cogswell has been poisoned. While out drilling it struck to his stomach and made him crazy. He made the night hideous with unearthly yells. They got him into one of the tents and it took five men to hold him down to the floor.

In the morning his face was so swollen he could not see out of his eyes. They had to lead him around as you would a blind man.

We were to have brigade drill yesterday but after we had gone part way to the drill ground we were sent back by Col. Abbott as the 1st had just received marching orders.

They have not gone yet and do not know when they will leave. Heavy siege trains have been sent down the river to Fortress Monroe. There were eighteen one hundred pounders besides a large number of ten inch mortars. In all fifty or sixty guns, none smaller than thirty pounder.

I suppose Mary Sam will pick up her "duds" and leave for home. Sam, I understand, thinks he will get his discharge and not go with his regiment.

Friday, 1 P.M.--

The 1st left last night at six P.M. They boarded transports and went down the river. I did not see them off. There were about sixteen hundred of them.

One of our captains was in Washington yesterday. He went to the Navy Yard where he saw a large number of heavy guns being put on boats to go down the river.

Before long another regiment will go from these defenses. All regiments have been put under marching orders and are to hold themselves in readiness. We had a similar order last spring and all of the regiments were under marching orders all summer.

Our company has been on fatigue this forenoon but at noon the rain drove them so they came home.

Yesterday afternoon the colonel must have a battalion drill. After we got there it up and rained just enough for us to get wet.

The 9th N.Y. is not as nice a regiment as ours or the 1st Conn.

The cars have not been running quite so much as they did before the army commenced moving. The base of the army for supplies will be Aquia Creek and Fredericksburg.

Around Alexandria the hospitals are making large preparations for wounded although as yet no wounded have arrived as far as I have heard.

Myron is feeling a little stronger and has a little more appetite than before. He has not strength enough to write a long letter and you must tell his folks that they must be contented until he is stronger.

None in the company are very sick. We have three in the hospital but they are able to get around.

If we should happen to leave here Myron and I will box up our extra blankets and send them home. I don't believe we should throw any of our things away.

I shall close for the present. Before the mail closes perhaps there will be some news.

Friday morning--

There is no news except it rained very hard almost all night with plenty of lightning.

Last Sunday we had divine service and inspection. There were two parsons from Connecticut here, one from New Hartford by the name of Spencer. The men like him very much better than the chaplain. I was not there so can tell you but little about them.

I must begin to draw this letter to a close. The thermometer on Monday was up to 94°. Wednesday it was up to 98°. It was very good hay weather. Grass would wilt very soon. Grass is up about six inches high, wheat about two feet high.

I suppose the body of Gen. Sedgwick is on the way home. I have met men who belonged to his corps who said that his men thought a great deal of him. The Rebs dreaded fighting him more than any other corps commander in the Potomac Army.

But I must say goodbye for the present.

Tell mother I should like to hear from her at no distant day.

Give my love to all the family.

From your son,
Lewis

PART II

IN COMBAT

If there is ever again any rejoicing
in this world it will be when this war
is over.

Lewis Bissell

"Cold Harbor one year later"



CHAPTER 6

Cold Harbor to Petersburg (May 17, 1864-July 2, 1864)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The heavy Union losses at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania necessitated Grant stripping troops from the Washington defenses. On May 15, the 2nd Connecticut was moved to forts that had been vacated by Federal troops departed for the front. Their stay was brief because the next day orders were issued for the regiment to report to General Meade. Leaving the 18th, they arrived at the Army of the Potomac headquarters on the 20th and were assigned to the VI Corps (Wright), First Division (Russell), Second Brigade (Upton).

The army began a southern movement and was engaged in some minor skirmishing. The first regimental combat fatality occurred at Jericho Mills on May 24. On June 1, the regiment arrived at Cold Harbor and attacked in the late afternoon, suffering many casualties. Grant tried another attack June 3 but was repulsed with heavy losses.

Before midnight on June 12, the regiment, as part of what has been called one of the greatest army movements in military history, suddenly moved south towards Petersburg. Grant had deceived Lee and could have taken the city easily on the 15th, but through a series of errors and missed opportunities, the chance was lost. Later, Grant tried to assault the city but by that time Lee had rushed in reinforcements and so a siege was ordered. Bissell's regiment arrived the 19th of June and relieved Hink's Brigade of Colored Troops at Harrison's Creek. On the 21st, the 2nd Connecticut moved to a position one mile east of the Weldon Railroad and three miles south of Petersburg, where until July 9, they built breast-works and settled into a routine similar to that of the days in the forts around Washington. The major difference was the constant sniper fire at Petersburg.

In action on other fronts, General Sherman continued his march towards Atlanta while Confederate General Jubal Early moved his army into Maryland. On July 6, Early captured Hagerstown; on the 9th, he defeated General Lew Wallace at the Battle of Monocacy near Frederick and began a move towards Washington, D.C.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell: The letters from Cold Harbor are among the most compelling written by Lewis Bissell. As you read about his first combat experience, be aware of how he characterizes it. Is his reaction to combat what you would have predicted? What fears does he take into combat? Will his reactions to future combat be the same?

In the battle formation at Cold Harbor, Bissell was in a very dangerous and exposed position (far left of the regiment, front row). The firing on his position was particularly deadly, but he survived. How does he accept the fact that he narrowly escaped death while many around him did not? Do you know of someone who miraculously survived what should have been a fatal accident? How did they react?

The men of Company A had a very close relationship with each other. Some of the men had been friends since childhood and some were related. The Cold Harbor battle cost Company A many casualties. How does Lewis deal with the battlefield deaths? Does he feel bitterness? Does he feel that the loss of life was senseless? Does this experience in any way make him reevaluate the war or his role in it?

After the battle, Bissell has a chance to reflect on it. What conclusions does he draw about leadership and heroism? What is his opinion of Colonel Kellogg and how does he compare the actions of Kellogg with those of other officers during the battle? Who do you feel are the heroic figures in the Cold Harbor battle? Now that Bissell has met the Rebel face to face, how does he characterize his enemy?

Northern Society. Grant lost 55,000 men from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor. At Cold Harbor alone, he lost 10,000 men in twenty minutes. What effect do you believe this had on Northern public opinion? In general, what effect do large losses of men in combat have on the public's will to continue the war effort? Give examples from other wars.

The Army. In what ways does the army of 1864 seem different from the one of 1863? What effect would the heavy casualties have on the men? Would the feelings of camaraderie be altered? How is the large scale replenishment of soldiers going to change the character of the army? How does the rapid growth or replacement of people change an organization, be it an army, a school, a business, or society? Give examples.

In chapter four we discussed the concepts of total war and chivalry. Bissell is obviously quite involved in the instituting of the total war philosophy of Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, and Lincoln. Does he in any way acknowledge this?

Continue to keep track of prices. Do you see any evidence of inflation? What may be the cause of inflation during wartime?

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

In this chapter, you will learn from the letters that Lewis Bissell undergoes his first experience of combat in the Battle of Cold Harbor. Prior to this time, he has had no contact with the enemy except for the occasional prisoner. You will not be able to fully appreciate his reactions to the battle, especially his emotions while he was directly involved in combat, as he is a reticent correspondent. Why does he not attempt to describe events in detail or to record his undoubted feelings of intense fear and horror? You should be able to speculate what his feelings must have been. You will later read other documentary and fictional accounts of battle as seen through the eyes of the common soldier: it will be interesting to compare your speculations with the experience and imagination of professional authors.

Erich Maria Remarque is one such author. Like most war novels, All Quiet on the Western Front is largely autobiographical, for like his narrator, Paul Baumer, Remarque served as a young man with the German Army in World War I. This novel has been hailed as "the classic war novel of all time" and "the greatest of all war books". When you finish the novel, you should be able to understand why, as this is a book of immense power, documenting in great detail the horrors and pleasures, the cowardice and courage, experienced by a group of young German soldiers involved in the terrible trench warfare of the Great War.

Comparisons with Bissell's accounts should be immediate and obvious. Bissell and Baumer are both inexperienced young men who must grow up rapidly in the face of disease, privation, death and violence. What are their feelings towards officers, and do their feelings towards those who have power over them change in any way? The spirit of camaraderie is emphasized in the two accounts: Baumer, like Bissell, is part of a close-knit group of friends of similar age and origin, and both groups share their fears, hopes and aspirations--as well as their living quarters and supplies. Are these respective groups exclusive, rejecting those who have not had the same experiences? As their wars progress, is group solidarity reinforced by their consciousness of being veterans? Are they contemptuous of the naive and eager new recruits that they see replacing the frequent casualties?

"War is hell" is an oft-repeated cliché. But you will be able to observe how hellish war actually can be, with both Bissell and Remarque. What particular horrors does Bissell mention? Remember he is writing to his parents, whom he does not wish to cause unnecessary anxiety. There are executions and accidental deaths as well as the deaths directly caused by battle. There is the confusion, anger and fear. There is the devastatingly powerful artillery which earlier he had admired as fine technology, but whose purposes and effects he can not properly understand. There are poisoned and dum-dum bullets. He experiences the deaths of friends and a relative.

Remarque's narrator Baumer also documents similar examples of bloodshed, violence and death. Note specific examples, and ask yourself what the author's purpose could be in creating such an explicit, unrelieved, and detailed recording of appalling events.

There are also differences between Baumer and Bissell, especially concerning morality and personal standards. Can you find examples of behavior on the part of Remarque's characters that Bissell would not consider? Why do you think Bissell maintains certain standards of conventional decent behavior while the young soldiers of All Quiet on the Western Front allow themselves to neglect standards that they had previously held? Which do you think is the more normal behavior in the conditions of war? What moral standards are suspended on the front in wartime? You should note, by comparison, whether Bissell records any examples of cruel or undisciplined behavior in the Union army, and also note examples of heroic behavior in both accounts. What do Bissell and Baumer regard as heroic and is it similar in the respective cases? If possible, find examples in either account of "beserker" behavior, and attempt to explain what this actually is, and what might provoke such behavior.

You should compare and contrast the values, attitudes and experiences of Paul Baumer with Claude Wheeler of One of Ours. Do you get an impression of greater order and less desperation in Willa Cather's account of World War I trenches? What might account for any differences? Do you think there might be a psychological and cultural difference between the Americans and the Germans involved in that war?

The writing assignment for this chapter is to produce an imaginative account of Bissell's experiences at Cold Harbor. Do not over-emphasize bloodshed and gore, but do not minimize it either. You should carefully study the letters to provide historical accuracy, and should employ verisimilitude to lend conviction to the piece. Above all, describe what you feel his emotions must have been in those terrifying and confusing circumstances. Use a third person narrative, and pay special attention to sensory language: the sounds, the physical sensations, the smells and the sights. This is not an easy piece to write successfully. Carefully consider the language and imagery.

Chapter 6

Cold Harbor to Petersburg
(May 17, 1864-July 2, 1864)

Letter #122

Fort Craig, Va., May 17, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose that you will hear that we are under marching orders and that we have moved from Fort Worth.

Last night the colonel received marching orders so today we are drawing our shelter tents. I have been up to Fort Corcoran for them. My knapsack is all packed and I am already to march no matter how soon the order comes.

We expect to march from here tonight or early in the morning. We are to take the boats near Alexandria in the morning.

I have all the clothing I need. I have a new dress coat which I shall have to leave.

A good many of the men have sent their boxes home but the night I came up here I had to go on guard so the next day did not feel well enough to go down to the fort for anything but sent for what I wanted.

Myron and I expressed some things home last week. Perhaps you have them. I am well provided with clothing so tell mother not to worry about that. I have all the things I want.

We are to take five days rations of crackers, pork, etc.

Myron is feeling very well, much better than for a long time.

We have our state orders, the pay rolls have come and the men are signing. We expect to get our pay before morning.

The men are feeling very well.

One of the 1st Conn. officers who has been up to Washington loading the seige train said that Col. Abbott sent to the Secretary of War for the 2nd C.H.A. as he had not enough men to manage the train and wanted us. So I suppose that is why we have to go. The last of the train was loaded last night.

All of the sick will be sent to the general hospital. Myron, I think, will go along with us. He will get his knapsack carried to the boat.

Everything is turned upside down. Men are packing up ready for the march. As for myself I never felt better in my life.

Most likely we will go down the river to Fortress Monroe.

You need not write until you hear from me.

We will leave but three men in the hospital besides those on furlough.

Guess Co. A. will be together for once tonight. It will be the first time since we came out.

The news is first rate.

The women are making tracks for Alexandria and Washington. Mrs. Wadhams leaves this evening.

I have sent my state order of \$10 in Myron's letter. If we don't get paid, I shall soon be out of money.

Now don't worry yourselves until you hear from me again.
Give my love to mother and all of the family and friends.
I remain as ever your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

On the Potomac all night. Almost down to Belle Plain. Don't know whether we stop here or not. The boys are all right. I am as well as ever. We don't know anything about our destination. My love to all.

Letter #123

Army of the Potomac
Near Gen. Burnside's Headquarters May 20, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose before this you have heard of our joining the Potomac Army.

Our boys are getting along very well. Today two of our men fell out. Luther Pratt was sent back to Fredericksburg to report to Dr. Gates. The other we left with the 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery.

We saw Dr. Gates in Fredericksburg. He is, I believe, in charge of a hospital there.

In two days we have marched about twenty-five miles. The roads are very good just now, not much dust.

The first night we slept at Belle Plain. The next night camped on the heights of Fredericksburg close to the rebel rifle pits. Now we are encamped a mile south of Gen. Grant's headquarters. The place was occupied by the Rebs yesterday morning.

The breast works that they lay behind are made of old rail fences and dirt. They are about two feet high.

There are three rebel graves close by.

We could hear the skirmishing this afternoon.

Gen. Burnside's corps lies in front of us, the Sixth Corps on the left which is our destination.

I wish Gen. Sedgwick were alive. Think that it would be for our interest.

We shall probably be in the 22nd Army corps but that is guess work.

Last night three hundred men from our regiment were employed cutting down trees and building breastworks. About one o'clock at night the regiment was called out, formed in line of battle and remained there until morning.

There are three heavy lines of battle between us and the Rebs but we can hear the pickets firing now and then.

I don't know if there is any way for mail to come here but the chaplain says one will leave here for Washington today.

Tom Beach is used up with rheumatism. Will be sent back, I think.

Myron stands it first rate. Holds out better than some of the well men. The old colonel is around among the men--sees to everything himself. Is not so pompous as he was once.

Our rations are salt pork, hardtack, and coffee. This we had to fetch all the way with us for we could not get transportation for our baggage wagons. We had to carry one hundred rounds of ammunition with us and six days' rations. We marched from twelve

to fourteen miles a day.

The country around here is first rate for the rebels to fight in. The streams run from the northwest to the southeast. Back from the streams for a mile or more the land is cleared then there will be a strip of woods then cleared land and so on.

The Rebs will fortify themselves on the north side of the woods so our men have to fight on cleared ground.

I have talked with some of the old soldiers. They place unbounded faith in Gen. Grant.

The Rebs hold the railroad. That taken from them they will be out of supplies.

The night we lay at Fredericksburg the 1st Mass. Heavy Artillery was attacked by a division of Ewell's Corps and four hundred of them were killed and wounded. Col. Tenatle was killed. His regiment occupied the fort north of the 1st Conn.

I have not seen a general officer yet.

At Gen. Grant's headquarters we saw Dr. Goodwin from Morris. He knew some of the men.

On the way down here we met about four hundred prisoners under a cavalry escort. They seemed pleased that they were through fighting. They were dressed in all sorts of clothing. Most of them wore gray with old slouch hats and long hair. They were a tough, rugged, looking set of men.

I must draw this to a close.

Some of the officers say we are in the 6th Corps, 3rd Division, 1st Brigade.

You need not write until you hear from me again.

I don't know that that is correct it is not officially announced yet. The colonel holds his own council.

But I must close.

Give my love to mother and all of the family and friends, etc.

I will write at the first opportunity.

Your affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #124

(Written on Cold Harbor Battlefield)

June 2, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you have been looking for a letter from me.

Since we landed at Belle Plain there has been no opportunity for sending mail out from the army. If we have marched ten miles, we have marched twelve times that distance.

We had one skirmish--none of us were hit. But the worst finally came and that was yesterday. We marched seven or eight miles and got here about 2 P.M.

The enemy had thrown up rifle pits in our front. The artillery opened on them with shells but that did not make them leave so the order came to charge on them.

Our regiment was drawn up in three lines of battle--one behind the other. Our company was in the front line. We went on the double quick--Col. Kellogg in front.

But here it seems as if I must stop.

The men began to fall and oh! The storm of leaden rain that was poured into us cannot be described.

The roar of musketry was terrible but not so awful as the cries of the wounded.

Co. A. has lost more than any other company in the regiment. Sixteen were killed and about eighty, perhaps more, wounded.

Capt. Wadhams was shot through his belt--is in the hospital. His recovery is doubtful. Myron has lost three fingers on his left hand.

Poor Lyman Smith lies dead on the enemies works I suppose. I have not seen him.

I must say goodbye.

1 P.M.--

Break the saw news to Lyman's mother and father. I have not seen his body but some of the boys have and attached his name. Robert Watt lies near him. Tell his mother that I have his Bible. I shall send it home if possible. If not, will keep it until I can.

Almon Bradley, Patrick Ryan, Corporal Jones, Sergeant Parks and Willard Parmelee lie near each other--dead.

June 3--

We are in line of battle behind breast works with a line in front of us. There has been heavy firing all along the line.

I could write the names of all the killed, but most of them would be strangers to you.

Of my tent squad, Corp. Jones was killed. Corp. Wilson Potter I suppose is dead. He was shot through the lungs. He is in the hospital dead or wounded. I have not heard from him this morning so don't know.

6 P.M.--

Wilson Potter is not dead yet.

The chaplain has come from the hospital.

Capt. Wadhams is still alive.

The wounded are, as far as I can learn, Charley Adams, Sergt. Mason, in the head, St. John--leg, Corp. Whiting--arm and side, Corp. Morse--died of wounds, Wood, Brooker--both legs, Savage--lost both arms, Ferris--leg, Robert Coe--one arm, Bray--wounded, Lieut. Camp--leg, Lieut. Tuttle--head, Major Ellis--leg, Mallory, Lawler, James Bradley--arm, Morehouse, Norman and Harvey Perkins--wounded, Wetmore, Waugh, Bailey, Belcher--missing, Benedict wounded, Brashing--wounded, Carter--wounded, Crawford--wounded, Dayton--wounded, Gunn--wounded, Hull--wounded, Iffland--killed, Lamb--wounded, McBath--wounded, Stillson--wounded, Swift--wounded.

These are all that I remember from our company that are wounded. A good many are missing. This morning there were not over fifty men for duty. We are the smallest company in the regiment.

Capt. Deane of Co. L is wounded in the head, also Lieut. Hatch. I have not put down all of the killed. I don't know the exact number of killed in the company. Theodore Vaill was not hurt.

We are in the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, 6th Army Corps. You cannot send letters to me; direct the mail to Washington, D.C.

The 8th Conn. is not far from here. Eben Oakes saw Seth Plumb a few days ago.

All of the other boys in the company are well.

I thank God that I am alive and well.

Give my love to mother and all the family and friends.

Hoping that these few lines will find you and set your anxious hearts at rest, I remain,

Your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

P.S. I shall write at ever opportunity.

In the charge we took three hundred and six prisoners.

Col. Upton our brigade commander is a very cool careful soldier. He will not take men where he cannot get them out. He is from West Point and is but twenty-three years old.

Gen. Russell the senior commander said, after the charge, "The men of the 2nd C.V.A. have won for themselves a name which is written in blood. They showed the same determined bravery for which Gen. Sedgwick was noted. They made a splendid charge-- Troops could not do better."

Today officers have been here to see the 2nd Regiment.

Goodbye.

Saturday 12 M, June 4--

P.S. Seth Plumb has just been here. His regiment is about three-fourths of a mile from here.

Corp. Cables and Will Plumb have gone down to see Will Cables.

Seth brings the sad news of Ed Wadham's death. Henry Wadhams was killed in a charge on the 24th of May.

I have heard about our wounded boys in the hospital. William Potter is dead and buried. Charley Adams is not expected to live. Poor boy! The doctors thought of taking off his arm but did not for fear he would not live through it.

One of our men by the name of Brashing is dead. Capt. Wadhams has been sent to White House where Mason has been sent. I have not found out how many others have been sent away. All will be as soon as transportation can be got for them.

I am told that all of our dead have been buried. I very much wanted to see them buried but did not have an opportunity to get away. They are very strict in front of the enemy.

Sergt. Hinsdale and I, the next morning after the fight, wrote the names, the company and regiment on slips of paper. Whether those who buried them took any pains to mark the graves, I do not know.

Last night the Rebs charged upon our men twice. We opened on them with grape and canister. They were driven back leaving the ground covered with their dead and wounded.

They are becoming desperate. Gen. Beauregard's forces are in our front.

The morning after the charge I went over to the rifle pits and made my breakfast off a rebel corn cake that I found in a haversack.

I picked up a rubber blanket which belonged to Maj. McDonald of the 153rd N.C. troops. I shall keep it as I lost my knapsack and all its contents.

Please send me in a letter some paper and postage stamps-- also a lead pencil. Perhaps they will come--perhaps not.

We have not seen a paper in a long time.

There has been heavy firing in our front all day. The enemy is very strong. They are in a swamp.

Our wounded have or will be sent to Washington. The surgeons are doing all they can for them.

Some companies did not lose a man in the fight. We lost the most--B and K next. As for the other companies, I don't know.

If there is ever again any rejoicing in this world, it will

be when this war is over.

One who has never been under fire has no idea of war.

Letter #125

Near Cold Harbor, 12 miles from Richmond
June 4

To H.B. Bissell,
Dear Father,

As an opportunity has offered itself to me, I shall improve it by writing to you.

It is now 6 P.M. and it looks as if we should have a rainy spell.

Charley Hinsdale, Will Plumb, and myself have put up our tents and now I am writing under canvas.

I must stop for the present for I must help draw our rations of hard bread, sugar, coffee, and fresh beef. We expect to draw salt pork in a day or two.

For the first ten days after leaving Belle Plain we did not have half rations. All we got was a portion of pork, hard tack and fresh beef without any salt.

A good many of the men suffered from diarrhea.

Along back we have had hard work to get fresh water. One night we marched from Guiney Station to the Pamunkey. We started at eight in the evening and halted a little after sunrise for breakfast. Then we crossed the river. A march of twenty-three miles.

Perhaps to you this does not seem very far but when one carries a musket, knapsack, five days' rations, a canteen of water, and forty rounds of ammunition if one's legs don't give out then no matter, no matter. These Virginia miles are very long to travel especially when one goes on foot.

On that march we suffered for water. I never was so thirsty before in my life and hope I never shall be again.

But now something else is to be done which will tell more than long marches.

All of our wounded have now been sent to Washington. They left yesterday. All of our dead have been buried.

Tell Aunt and Uncle Smith that I had no opportunity to get any of Lyman's things. His pockets had been rifled that morning by some heartless soldier. Col. Upton caught one at this and had him punished by tying him to a tree.

Lyman had written sixteen pages of letters before the fight. These we cannot find nor can I find his watch which I wanted to get.

Charley Hinsdale found his body, wrote his name on a slip of paper, and fastened it to his clothes so those who buried him might know who he was and mark where he was buried.

Lieut. Cogswell saw him when he was shot. He was killed instantly. Lyman had felt well most all of the time since we left the forts. I saw him a few minutes before the fight. It seems hard to lose him, also William Potter. I did not see him after he was hit.

Charley Adams lay on the ground where he fell all night.

I tried to get some water for the wounded but could not find any. We could not get stretchers on which to carry our wounded off the field. The next morning I helped carry Brooks off in a blanket. I never shall forget the moaning and cries of distress

that came from our wounded boys.

We went into the fight with one hundred and eight muskets. Now there are but forty in the company for duty. Eighteen were killed and thirty-four wounded. The killed, wounded, and missing of the regiment are about three hundred.

We captured one rebel major and one lieutenant colonel.

I have a rubber blanket that belonged to Maj. McDonald of the 153rd N.C. troops. I found it in the rebel works where we took three hundred and six prisoners.

All of this cost blood and the precious lives of those who were as dear to us as brothers. One seldom sees a smile on the faces of the men in Co. A. We feel lonely. Our captain is gone and we have not a single officer in the company.

Almon Bradley and Patrick Ryan fell near each other. I saw them both. In Pat's pocket we found \$20. I think he had that amount with him.

I will get the list of killed and wounded from Sergt. Williams. I hope it will be the last one that will ever be made of our company.

The 8th C.V. are encamped about half a mile from us.

I saw Seth Pond and Will Cables yesterday, and Frank Gilbert this morning. Frank has not been very well of late but he says he is feeling better.

There is a story around that Gen. Grant has forbidden the troops making any more charges unless he orders them. I hope it is so.

Our troops are at work digging out the rebels. They are entrenched in woods in rather swampy ground. If we should have a long rain and the Chickahominy should rise, it would drown them out. Yesterday our troops were so close to them that they threw stones at each other, but when they get a chance, they shoot.

Yesterday we got our mail from Alexandria--the first since we left. I got a letter from you and Phill. I shall send this today if any mail goes out. There is no regularity about our getting mail or sending it. But you can send to me.

I would like some postage stamps and if possible a lead pencil and some paper.

Will Cables has just come. He is sitting on the ground close by me, smoking his pipe. I have told him that I wish it was the pipe of peace and if it was would take one whiff myself.

Re-enforcements are coming in all of the time. Artillery is arriving.

A large number of Hundred day men have just come in. They are to guard the supply trains and do other similar duties.

I must draw this to a close as paper will not hold out.

Give my love to mother and to all of the family and friends.

Major Hubbard is now lieutenant colonel. Very likely he will be our colonel. I hope so. You will hear about our wounded boys before I do as some of them will be able to write.

Please write as soon as you get this, if you ever do.

There is heavy firing by our skirmishers in our front. They are strongly entrenched.

I have seen Maj. Gen. Wright who is in command of our corps. He took Gen. Sedgwick's place.

List of wounded and killed

Sergeant Parks	k	Brashing	died
" Mason	w	Everett	k
Corporal Jones	died	Fallen	k
" Adams	w	Hitchcock	k
" Meeker	k	John Iffland	k
" Morse	died	Willard Parmelee	k
Corporal Wedge	w	Patrick Ryan	k
Privates:		Scull	k
Barton	k	Lyman Smith	k
Almon Bradley	k	Tilford	k
Robert Watt	k	Lamb	w
Bailey	w	Lawler	w
Belcher	w	McBath	w
Benedict	w	Morehouse	w
James Bradley	w	Norman Perkins	w
Andrew Brooker	w	Prindle	w
Michael Bray	w	Harry Perkins	w
Candee	w	Savage	w
Carter	w	Swift	w
Coe	w	Wetmore	w
Cogswell	w	Wood	w
Crawford	w	Maj. Ells	w
Dayton	w	Capt. Wadhams	w
Gunn	w	" Deane	w
Hull	w	Lieut. Camp	w
		" Hatch	w

Col. Kellogg was shot in five different places. I saw his body the next morning and helped carry it off the field.

k stands for killed

w for wounded

Cold Harbor and Hell.

Letter #126

Near Cold Harbor, Va., June 6, 1864

Dear Father,

I mailed a letter to you yesterday which was Sunday but it seemed little like Sunday for every few minutes we heard a bullet whiz about thirty feet over our heads. We have become use to them now so we don't mind them anymore than you would the wind.

We have laid here ever since the first of June. We have rested and feel some better. A good many of our men have been about sick from hard marching. Many had blistered feet so that they can hardly walk.

The night of the fourth the Rebs made three charges on our lines to the right of us but were repulsed leaving three hundred dead on the ground between their works and ours.

The night we made the charge, which was about sun down, our regiment captured three hundred and six prisoners of war. The loss on their side of the rifle pits was as many killed and wounded as ours. Our regiment lost three hundred and eighty-one killed and wounded but you will hear of this through other channels.

I am so sorry I could not save the valuables of our men before

some sneaking rascals got them but I could not. Perhaps the relatives and friends of the honored dead will think differently. Had they been here, they would know why.

As it was we had to run a good deal of a risk in getting our wounded off. One of our men had a narrow escape in getting one of our boys who lay on top of the rifle pits. The rebel sharp shooters were playing upon us. More than fifty balls flew around our ears. Some of them came very close to us.

We have not heard from our wounded men who were sent to White House. I hope to hear that they are doing well. I hope to hear that Capt. Wadhams and Charley Adams are alive and will live. The men in the regiment are anxious to hear that Capt. Wadhams is alive. They think as much of him as his company does.

In your letter you asked about the country we marched over, the places we have been in, etc.

Belle Plain does not sport so much as a single board shanty. It is mostly mud and that half way to one's knees at every step taken. If there is a dry place I would like to see it.

Steep hills come down to the water's edge and it is very hilly country between there and Fredericksburg.

I saw but few stylish looking houses on the road. The cleared ground had all been planted to corn and wheat for the rebel army. But I guess it won't do them much good.

We left Belle Plain early in the morning of the 19th and marched to Fredericksburg. We stopped for a short rest opposite the town and close to where our armies, under Burnside, lay all winter. I saw the Lacy house that you read about.

We crossed a pontoon bridge, built of boats. The river is about as wide as the Naugatuck but it is a sluggish muddy stream. Small boats can run up as far as the city. I saw the hulls of two or three old boats. The docks had been destroyed.

While crossing over we could see where our men had peppered the houses close to the river side. Some of the houses were as full of bullet holes as an old roof is full of nail holes.

The town looked dirty and as if everything was going to ruin. Most of the houses are built of wood, a few of brick. I did not see a single store open. One was a hospital and the counter used for an amputating table.

A few of the fashionables still live there. I saw some of them sitting in their houses, clothed in fine linen looking at the soldiers.

The streets are wide--were once well paved but war has worked a change so now they look something like Alexandria.

Soldiers and baggage trains filled the streets. At every corner a cavalry man with drawn sword was stationed to keep order, etc.

We marched to the burying ground. The west wall is built of brick and we could see where our men had knocked out bricks to make port holes through which they fought the Rebs.

We encamped for the night close by the rebel works--the very ones the 8th C.V. fought against. North of the town is a large flat field a fourth of a mile wide--then comes the heights on which the Rebs lay.

After we had made camp and coffee our band began to play which drew crowds.

We slept that night like a thousand of brick. Next morning we

were up early, packed, and started for the headquarters of Gen. Grant. We passed by the place where the rebel General Ed. Johnson was captured. At least that is what we were told. I don't know how true it is.

The country around there was wooded but in places the trees had been cut and sprouts were taking the place of the timber.

When we got almost to Meade's headquarters we met about four hundred rebel prisoners that the cavalry were taking to Fredericksburg.

Most of them were clothed in gray uniforms made of very coarse material. Some of them had on citizen's clothes with old slouch hats.

They wore their hair long. Most of them were rather tall, hatchet faced and took snuff. They marched very fast and seemed pleased to be getting away from fighting--for the C.S.A. Some of them said "We will be back to help you before long."

Gen. Meade's headquarters was in the edge of some woods. We stopped there and while we made coffee the colonel reported for duty. We were assigned to the 6th Corps 1st Division, 2nd Brigade.

Since then I have learned there was considerable wire pulling among the division commanders to get the Second which came from the same county as brave Gen. Sedgwick.

Gen. Russell commands the division. We were assigned to the 2nd Brigade commanded by the then Col. Upton. He is now a brigadier general having been promoted on recommendation of Gen. Grant.

We marched to Meigs Hill, a mile from headquarters where we encamped in the woods that day and night.

The next morning the right wing of the army commenced moving.

Our men had been building breastworks all night.

In the morning our artillery was put in position and we were put behind the breastworks to support the artillery.

Our pickets began falling back. The Rebs followed up and finally charged the skirmish line. Our artillery opened on them and shelled them out. Our men lay behind their rifle pits until after dark.

After dark the corps began moving to the left. We brought up the rear of the entire army. We marched all night but very slowly and went but a few miles.

About daylight we stopped and cooked coffee. Part of our company was thrown out as skirmishers. I was one of them.

I must stop as it is now twilight. The Rebs and our men are popping away at each other pretty lively. The men are beginning to put on their traps and get their muskets so as to be ready for a fight. But I guess this will be a little one.

This afternoon a flag of truce was ordered up between the Rebs and us. Our men went half way, shook hands with the Rebs and exchanged bacon for papers. A rebel sharpshooter and one of our own shook hands but just as soon as they returned to their trenches, they began to fire at each other. One of ours got hit in the hand. I don't know about the others.

Among the rebels was a captain. When the time was up he forgot to go back and stayed on this side. He said that Jeff was welcome to his commission. He did not want it as he was through fighting for the C.S.A.

The day before two Rebs started to give themselves up. They were fired upon--one was killed, the other wounded and died in our camp.

The rebel captain said that a whole corp would give themselves up if they thought our government would not retaliate for the Fort Pillow massacre. Their officers are all that hold them. They will fight only when pushed to it.

But I must return to where I left off.

We marched all day and in the afternoon crossed the Frederick and Richmond R.R. above Guinea Station. We got our dinner and supper then started.

After recrossing the railroad below the station crossed the Po at Guinea Bridge, marched twelve or fifteen miles and halted at about 12 midnight. Slept until morning. This was three miles west of Bowling Green.

From Bowling Green we marched to the Island Ford on the North Anna River, arriving about midnight. Crossed the river the morning of the 23rd and marched a short distance and lay there that day.

In the afternoon Capt. Wadhams and a detail from our company of which I was one were sent to picket on the Virginia Central R.R.

The rebel sharp shooters began to fire (line illegible) and buried there.

The next day we tore up the tracks for two miles and burned a bridge at Beaver Dam. We then recrossed the river and marched to Chesterfield Station. Here we drew rations.

Then came that long and tiresome march to Hanover Town on the Pamunkey River. We did not see any town, only one old house without windows.

Men fell out. When we halted for breakfast our company did not have half its number. After breakfast we crossed the river and encamped for the night and got some rest.

The next day being Saturday we marched about three miles and halted.

The 2nd Corps commenced passing by Gen. Cutler's division and passed just before we arrived.

Mason started to look for his brother as did Capt. Wadhams for his. The captain soon returned with the sad news of his death. Mason did not find (illegible) company so came back.

We stayed (line illegible) ford towards Hanover Court House. We went within three miles of there. Stayed overnight.

The next day, Monday, we marched toward Richmond. Came across a guide board on which was marked, "17 miles to Richmond." We passed over the battle ground of Hanover Court House. Had to march very fast for we were without any support. Joined the rest of the corps in the afternoon.

That night our company was thrown out on picket. Got some shovels and dug rifle pits. Had just finished them when the captain came around and ordered us to fall back one at a time. We withdrew leaving the Rebs to fire at our empty rifle pits.

After rejoining the regiment we marched very fast.

Passed by where the 2nd Corps was encamped on the left. Arrived here about noon of June 1.

After dinner we commenced building breastworks. The artillery was put in position and began shelling the Rebs who answered with shells.

We lay drawn up in line of battle. Col. Kellogg wearing his old straw hat walked back and forth in front of the regiment and watched the shells explode around him.

Finally over the breastworks we went across a cleared field and drove the Rebs from behind a rail fence down a side hill, through a grove of pines.

The bullets began to fly over, around, by and through some of us. We reached the felled trees without much loss but here those that were not shot down had to lie down. Finally, we rose and went over the pits. The Rebs gave up and ran through our lines to the rear. We held the pit, that is, those who were not hit or lost.

The wounded had to lie all night where they fell. One of our men by the name of Wood was wounded in four places. He said that death was preferable to such a night.

We could hear our men groan but could not leave our position to attend to their wants. If we had, the Rebs might have attacked us and driven us back so that we could not remove the wounded and would have had to leave them to the tender mercies of the rebels.

While we held the pits our dead were robbed of their valuables by soldiers in the rear who belonged to other regiments. One was arrested and tied to a tree.

If we had been relieved sooner we could have saved many things which those at home would have prized.

On the body of Willard Parmelee we found between \$200 and \$300.

Since the fight we have held the rifle pits and are now digging up toward the rebels. In some places the lines are not more than fifty feet apart.

Every evening the Johnnies, as they are called, make an attack upon our lines. As yet they have got the worst of it. Last night about midnight they commenced one but soon dried up.

Heavy firing was heard last night in the direction of the James River. I think Grant will soon make a flank movement, throw pontoons across the James River and get in between Fort Darling and Richmond and work into Richmond by the back door.

All are confident Gen. Grant will accomplish his object if it takes miles of digging.

The generals tell us we will not soon be put in front again. Perhaps will not all summer. I hope we never will.

The rebel works, where we charged, were something the shape of the letter **B**. The letter **a** is where our company charged. The Rebs had a cross fire on us. That is what mowed us down so. They can never get us to make another charge. We don't care where they put us the men will not do it.

This morning there are but forty men for duty.

Yesterday some of the 8th C.V. came from White House and brought the sad news of Capt. Wadhams' death. They saw the box containing his embalmed body. It was addressed to his folks at home. We were in hopes that he would live. But now the best of officers and men has gone.

All of the men in the regiment feel sad in losing so kind an officer so good a man and soldier.

If we ever live to see home again this company will claim the privilege of erecting a monument over his grave. It is a sad time for us and sadder for Mr. Wadhams and his people--three sons lost within fifteen days.

Old Litchfield's best sons have laid their lives on the alter of their country. Their blood has moistened the sacred sod of Virginia. I hope no more will have to be shed in the present campaign.

I must draw my letter to a close.

We do not know how long we will stay here. Are between eight and ten miles from Richmond.

I wish you would send me some thread and needles in your next letter.

My knapsack was ransacked. I have lost one of the shirts mother made. The only one I have is the one I have on. I take it off, wash it, put it on and let it dry on my back.

One cannot buy anything here for love or money.

I shall send money home just as soon as I can see the chaplain and find out about it. He has sent a good deal of money home for the men.

I hope I shall soon hear from you. You can send papers. If you will send me a map of the vicinity of Richmond and Spottsylvania I will mark the route we came over and our place at present and send it back to you.

I should like to see some of the latest papers. We have not seen any papers giving news of what is going on.

I must say goodbye.

Love to all the family and friends.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #127

Cold Harbor, Va., June 10, 1864

Dear Aunt,

It has been almost impossible for me to write.

No doubt you have been anxious to hear from dear Lyman since we left Belle Plain but you have heard before this that he has lost his life in the defense of his country. It is hard for us to give him up and we mourn with you in your loss.

(Three lines illegible)

I saw Lyman after he was killed. He had been shot in the head and breast.

Lieut. Cogswell of Co. B. saw him when he was killed. He says Lyman died instantly.

I saw his body the next morning. Today I carved his name on a board and put it at the head of his grave. He and Sergt. Parks were buried side by side in one grave.

In the morning I went to his body to get his watch and other things but some one had robbed his pockets. I would gladly give more than the value of his watch if I could only get it but it is impossible. I could not find his knapsack. He had told me that there were in it sixteen pages of letters which he had written and which he would send home at the first opportunity.

I spoke to him a few moments before we made the charge. He told me that some of us would live to see the end of the war and some would fall before the works of Richmond but he said, "We must submit to whatever comes."

He enjoyed the best of health on the march. He marched by my side most of the time. We talked of home and of the prospects

of the end of the war. He said, "When I go home, I shall know how to enjoy its blessings and all of its comforts. I shall appreciate it a thousand times more than if I had never been away."

There was no opportunity to look after anyone during the fight and just after it. A good many of the wounded had to lie where they fell until morning when we got to them. Some were taken off under a heavy fire from rebel sharpshooters.

In the charge Lyman did not falter. He was among the first.

I have thought of him many times since. It seems as if I had lost as much as you. He had been with me all of the time we had been out and has been all a brother could be.

It seems that his time to die had come and by the hands of his country's enemies.

His body now fills a soldier's grave.

I wish he could have had a box or some sort of coffin but that is not to be had down here.

We all feel the loss of those who fell. They were like brothers to each other and to us. Some had been with us ever since we left Camp Dutton, others joined the regiment last winter, but the enemies bullets make no distinctions--one will fall and another live.

A New York regiment was on its way home a few days ago. While marching across an open field one of their number was shot dead. He was on his way home.

Ever since we came out Lyman had done his duty and did it well. No officer ever found fault with him. The men in the company liked him. I don't know that he had an enemy. If he had he never let it be known.

This afternoon Charles Hinsdale and myself found his grave. I marked a board with his name, company, regiment and when killed. We put it at the head of his grave. If it is allowed to remain his body can be taken up and sent home.

I am sorry I was unable to find anything that belonged to him.

I would have written before this but I lost everything I had in shape of paper and could not buy any.

Perhaps people will think we were negligent in looking after our wounded and dead but all that tired and worn out men could do was done, I think, by our company. We had more than any other company in the regiment. It was impossible to get stretchers to carry our men on. For Capt. Wadhams the men made one of their muskets and carried him over a mile and a half. We carried the men on blankets and tents. They suffered terribly--poor fellows. Charley Adams and others lay all night without a thing over them.

I found them in the evening. They wanted me to get them carried off. I could not find anyone to help me until morning. Then Charley Hinsdale came. We carried them off. Some were so faint they could not speak.

Some lay in very exposed positions and we carried them in a shower of balls from the unmerciful rebels.

I saw one of the wounded rebels. He was a young man from North Carolina. He was not over twenty--said he had been drafted into the rebel army and that if he could get north he would remain there for the rest of his life.

At the time of the charge, I did not nor do I think anyone but Capt. Wadhams realized the danger that we would soon be exposed

to. He seemed to feel the danger more than any officer in the regiment. He was in front of the company--had his sabre drawn--was very cool--did not seem to be excited in the least--at the same time he knew what was coming. I doubt if any other officer realized as he did what was ahead. Few if any had been under fire before. Most of them were in a great measure ignorant of what was coming.

His loss cannot be made good by any other officer in the regiment. If an officer ever had the good will of the men of his company and regiment he had it. None were more respected or obeyed with more pleasure than Capt. W. He was the soldier's friend and did not feel himself better than the soldier nor did he wish others to think him any better than the privates under him.

If more of our officers in the army were in some respects like Capt. W. this war would be pushed through with more vigor and more lives would be saved to the country.

As for myself, I have enjoyed the best of health ever since we left Alexandria. Sometimes I have felt most worn out but have made out to keep up with our regiment.

I have known men to march all day with hardly anything to eat. At home they would have been sick in bed.

I have not heard about our wounded boys since they left for White House. Some of the surgeons said they would be taken to Fortress Monroe and from there be sent to New Haven. I hope they will for then they will have the best of care and friends will come to comfort them.

The surviving members of the company sympathize with those who have lost dear ones. We mourn and weep with you for those who are lost. We have lost friends who were to us as brothers.

I hope I may have the pleasure of hearing from you for letters from home are like sunshine after storm. Do write and I will answer if possible, although it may be only an imitation of a letter.

Give my love to Uncle and cousins.

I remain with much love, your affectionate nephew.

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Direct to 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, 6th Corps with letter of company, regiment and state.

Letter #128

Camp Near Cold Harbor, Va., June 10, 1864

Dear Father,

It is now about twenty minutes to 2 P.M.

I am sitting beside my tent and as I have nothing to do just now will commence a letter to you. I cannot tell how much of it I shall be able to write before I have to stop as we are liable to be called on any moment. There is no telling what is coming or when.

Chas. Barber, William Plumb, Chas. Hinsdale and I tent together. Four of us sleep under two tents. All we want is a covering to keep off the dew.

Have just finished dinner. What do you think we had? I'll bet you can't guess. There was hardtack, baked potatoes, beans and coffee.

We have to be our own cooks down here.

We were so fortunate as to purchase two cans of condensed milk at 75¢ per can. This we cook with our rice which is very nice. It helps out wonderfully.

Yesterday at 1 P.M. we were ordered to draw eight days' rations of pork, beans, hardtack, sauerkraut, rice, potatoes, fresh beef, soap, salt, pepper, sugar, and coffee. Now, I don't know that you know it, but it is more than one man can carry in one haversack.

We do not suffer from the want of rations now. On the march from Belle Plain we were furnished with six day's rations of hardtack, sugar, and coffee. This we lived on for seven days. Some of our boys offered a dollar for a hardtack.

We drew fresh beef at Guinea Station but no salt. We lived from hand to mouth until we got here. Ever since we have had from three to five days' rations on hand.

Our base of supplies has been changed from White House to some place on the James River. As it is now, we are not in want of provisions.

We are getting so we can cook very well, at least it tastes good to us.

Almost every place we have been in we have encamped in a cornfield. The dust is two inches deep. In this we have to live, eat, drink, and sleep. We pitch our tents, spread our rubber blankets and just make ourselves perfectly at home.

We do most of our cooking in our little quart cups. They are about the largest pail we can carry.

You may talk of starving out the rebels but let me tell you that so long as they can hold Virginia they will not starve. Between Fredericksburg and this place all the cleared ground that can raise corpse is sowed with wheat or planted to corn. I have marched for miles over corn ridges and wheat fields. Almost every night we were sure to be encamped on plowed ground.

Nearly all of the way we marched beside the road while the supply trains had the road. Sometimes we would have to go through woods and across swamps--anyway to get along.

If all the army had marched on the road, it would have reached from Meigs Hill to Richmond. So the more lines of march the sooner the camping place is reached.

The march from Chesterfield to Hanover Town was the hardest march the Army of the Potomac ever made. Many men who have been through many long marches and hard fought battles say they never before had such a hard time. They thought our regiment held out wonderfully and say we are a very spunky set of men.

We don't have many stragglers from our regiment.

There have been but few casualties since the first of June--none in our company. One of our men had part of his fingers shot off.

Yesterday P.M. I marked a board with Lyman Smith's name. Chas. Hinsdale and I went out and found his grave and put up the board. Hope it won't be molested.

Lyman and Serg. Parks were buried in the same grave, side by side. We know where the men of our company are buried. If we had anything to mark and put up we should do it.

I did not see Capt. Wadhams after he was wounded, nor Wilson Potter, or Myron. None of the boys were carried off that night. I worked all of the next day helping to take care of our own

boys. There were so many of them and so few of us that it kept us busy all of the time to say nothing about being up all of the night before in the entrenchments we had taken from the Rebs besides the morning's march of the day of the battle.

Our men were completely worn out. I do not think they could have possibly marched three miles more.

The troops we fought were marched from Richmond that day--arrived three hours before the charge. They were somewhat surprised by the way we attacked them.

We have not heard from our wounded and, of course, feel very anxious about some of them. I do hope they may have the best of care. They deserve it after going through what they did and coming out alive.

At the time of the charge I did not realize one half the danger. Since then I have gone over the ground and seen what an exposed position we were in. I have seen how the trees have been marked by the bullets, the twigs cut off and the tops riddled. The branches looked like a corn field after a hard hail storm. It does not seem as though a man could have come out alive.

Lieut. Robert A. Potter has been unwell--has had an attack of fever and ague but is some better now. He is in command of the company. We want him for our future captain but do not know that they will allow us our choice.

We are expecting to be under marching orders very soon but can't tell what will happen.

Some think our chances for the big guns are very good--much better than before.

Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that we have a new colonel or a man that the officers say is to be our colonel. He is a West Pointer--a captain of engineers in the regular army. He stood number one in his class at West Point.

Wednesday, June 15--

Will make the most a few moments. We are all well. Are about a mile and a half from the James River. My love to all.

We are waiting for the pontoons to be thrown across. When this is done very likely we will cross. None of our men have been wounded lately. All of Co. A. are well.

There are not forty muskets in our company.

Lieuts. Potter and Marsh are with us now.

Please send by mail some paper and pencils. Can't buy a thing here.

Shall send money when I find it can be done. Money is not handled very carefully in the army.

We are somewhere near Charles City Court House.

My love to all the family and friends.

Direct to 6th Army Corps, 1st Division, 2nd Brigade.

No express can come but things can come by mail.

Your boy,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. William Plumb and Chas. Hinsdale are with me. Have not heard from the wounded boys.

L.

Please send this to H.B. Bissell

Letter #129

South Side of the James River 18 Miles
from Richmond, 6 Miles from Bermuda
Hundred June 18, 1864

Dear Father,

I have a few moments in which to write so I shall improve them.

We are now encamped in a grove of pines a mile or more in the rear of the earth works.

The regiment is about tired out. The men are very quiet. Most of them are very quiet. Most of them are stretched out at full length on the ground resting.

I have forgotten where we were when I wrote you last.

We left Cold Harbor the 11th and marched all of that night. Some of the time we moved very slowly as we brought up the rear and the Corps did not get well under way until 2 o'clock in the morning.

It was very dusty. The dust rose in a cloud thicker than the thickest fog you ever saw. It was almost impossible for us to breathe.

We passed the 2nd Corps then stopped and got breakfast. Then we started out at almost a gallop. Before night we crossed the Chickahominy. Marched about two miles and halted for the night with orders to be ready to march at five the next morning.

We were up at four got breakfast then we were ready. At eight we started for the James on a dog trot. Marched about four (?) miles. Halted in a wheat field got dinner, pitched camp and stayed all night.

The morning of the 14th we marched to within a mile of the river. Spent the day in throwing up breastworks. In the evening we marched to the landing. The name of the place is Charles City Court House.

We went on board of the ferry about 1 P.M. and arrived at City Point about sunrise. Stopped there a few moments and then went up to Bermuda Hundred.

We landed the morning of the 17th, marched about five miles and halted for breakfast. Stayed there until about 2 P.M. then marched to our present position where we are encamped.

There is no telling how long we will stay in this place but hope for some time.

The 1st, 6th, 7th, and 10th Conn. are not more than a mile or so from us. Have just seen Geo. DeForrest. The 1st has had quite an easy time. They have not marched ten miles since they left Washington while we have marched from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five miles. Perhaps you cannot see the distance on the map but if you have to foot it with thirty pounds on your shoulders you would see every rod of ground. The old soldiers say these Virginia miles are as long again as a New England mile.

Most of the country we have travelled over is not very hilly. It is not like Litchfield County. The ground is just uneven enough for the water to run off well. Some of it is sandy. Near the James River it is more clayey.

Most of the timber is pine--some oak. The pines run up straight as a gun barrel and about as slim.

Some of the men who have been here say that a large number of rebel torpedoes have been taken out of the James. Our fleet has a

way of taking them out without exploding them. They find them loaded with from ninety to one hundred pounds of powder.

I have not looked around any since we halted here for I have felt worn out and rest must be had when it can be found.

There are a good many sutlers here. They do not ask anything but large prices for their stuff. Lemons three for 25¢, preserves sell in proportion. As our men have lived on hardtack, coffee, pork, and fresh meat for the past month, they pitched into such things and did not stop to beat down prices like neighbor K's folks.

We can hear the firing in the direction of Petersburg and all along the lines. Our lines are a mile or more perhaps two miles from the Petersburg and Richmond R.R. I don't know if the rebels use them or not but our forces command five of the seven roads that center in Petersburg.

We passed by Gen. Butler's headquarters but did not see the general. I have not seen Gen. Grant or Meade or Wright. We do not see as much of the generals as one would suppose.

I suppose some of the boys will write that we are going to have heavy guns. I don't believe any of those stories or give any encouragement to the tellers. When we get them it will be time enough to believe the stories.

It looks more like rain than it has for a long time. Hope we have rain for we need it very much.

If you wish to see flies just come down here. They can be found by the bushel.

We have heard the sad news of the death of Charley Adams at Washington and of his father coming down to White House for him where he learned he had been sent to Washington.

We have heard that some of the boys have been sent to Washington and others to New Haven. We don't know anything more about them.

Have you heard about Myron or any of our wounded boys? Please write about them.

Our men have been troubled with diarrhea caused by poor water and sleeping on the ground without anything over or under them.

Charley Hinsdale is well. Will Plumb is in the ambulance train. Was put in the morning of the 16th before we crossed the James River. I have not heard from him since. Joseph Bradley is with the ambulance train. He said he would look after Will as much as possible.

A good many of our men are about worn out. I don't think they could march very far at the present time.

The James River is very crooked. If a bird should undertake to fly across it would light on the same side.

Charles Goslee and one other of our company who were left behind arrived today. Willard Watrous is not very well but is with the company. James Osborn is feeling pretty well now. He seems to stand it very well. Almon Bradley was shot in the head at the battle of Cold Harbor. I doubt if he knew what hit him. He must have fallen dead on the spot. Willard Parmelee fell on top of him. Five of our men lay dead within ten feet of each other.

I guess you will think this is a queer letter for I have written just what happened to come into my mind.

Saw Capt. Pratt of the 1st Conn. There has been two or more deaths in their company since they landed here. Saw some of the 6th who said that they had lost about one hundred and fifty men killed

and wounded within the last few days. They are encamped a mile or so from here.

Monday Morning, June 20

Dear Father,

I received your letter of June 12th last night about sundown also one from Uncle Fred and Aunt Maria of April--one from Myron dated from Patterson Park Hospital Baltimore.

If a man can get off with his life he is lucky, I think.

Only one man has been wounded since we made the charge. He was wounded in the hand and is with the company.

When your letter arrived we were lying behind the rebel breast works that had been thrown up a year or more ago. It is a good work and in a strong place and could sweep across a plain in front of it. It has a deep ditch so men could not cross it. In the road there was a place for a battery.

These works were taken by Butler's negro troops. We relieved them. One regiment was the 2nd U.S. Colored. I never saw a more healthy set of men. They did not look worn out like our men but fresh and healthy.

They charged up the road in the face of the rebel battery, filed to the right and left then charged over the works.

We are a little more than a mile from the city. We can see the church spires above the trees. They are the first church spires I have seen since we left Fredericksburg.

When we crossed the James River we went by the grave of Pochahontas. It is in a brick enclosure grown over with wild trees. It has never been disturbed. I could not tell what the trees were as it was almost dark at the time.

We marched from our camp in the rear of the 1st Conn. for about eight or ten miles between the hours of 8 and 1 P.M. The road was very dusty. In some places the dust was shoe deep.

At the present our regiment is in the front line of rifle pits nearest the rebel works. Shot and shell are flying over our heads every moment.

We can hear the whistle of the engines on that part of the road that leads into Petersburg. If our forces can get possession of the town and railroad their communication with the south is lost.

The rebel works are not more than three hundred yards from us. Our videttes are twenty yards in front.

There have been seven wounded, one mortally, and one killed in the regiment--none from our company.

The country around here is just as nice as you or I would want to live in.

I have not slept any for the past twenty-four hours.

The sun is shining and it is quite hot.

We expect to be relieved tonight.

Tuesday afternoon--

We were relieved last evening. At the present time of writing, 1 P.M., we are sitting in a rifle pit dug in a side hill and large enough for 8 men to lie down. This is half a mile in the rear.

We have our shelter tents up and are making ourselves comfortable. Theodore sits beside me writing.

Seth Plumb has just left. Thomas Beach is in the ambulance train. Have not seen him in some time.

Goodwin Osborn is with the supply train. Have not seen him since the 1st of June. Believe he is well.

We have heard of the deaths of two of our wounded boys, Harvey Perkins and Stephen Mallory. The former is a brother to Norman Perkins. They live over east of Litchfield.

This makes twenty-four deaths in the company since June 1. It does not seem possible that there are twenty-four less in our company than when we started from Fort Craig. The best men in the company have fallen. It does not seem like the same company. It makes us feel sad to look at some of the companies that have lost but a man or two and think what our company was once and see it now.

I suppose you have heard of our new colonel. His name is MacKenzie. He is a graduate of West Point is an engineer and was first in his class. He takes good care of his men.

While I have been writing, Will Plumb has come in from the ambulance train. He is much better.

You ask if I have any writing paper. I did not have any until I got to the James River. I have had no chance to get postage stamps. One can't buy them down here.

All of the letters I have written home have been marked, "Soldier's Letter." I wrote one the 5th of June which, I see by your letter, has not arrived. I think I have written two since then. Perhaps you will get them, perhaps not.

But I must stop and write a few lines to mother.

Give my love to all of the friends and family.

From your son,
Lewis

Letter #130

June 18, 1864

Dear Mother,

I am very glad to get a letter from you. The last letter from home reached me the other side of the James.

Since then we have marched fifteen miles and have been up two nights in succession. Now we are resting for the first time since we crossed the river. But we are liable to march at any moment.

We have to draw rations in the night which destroys our sleep. We have not had a whole night's sleep since we crossed the James.

You wanted to know if I had any paper, etc. I have not but one postage stamp of those that came in the letter of the 12th, for which I am very thankful.

I lost my needle book and all that was in it. If you can, send me one armed and equipped as the law directs. Put in some yarn for mending stockings, some pins and a small piece of sealing wax. It is often very useful. It can come by mail, as packages come to the boys by almost every mail. I should like some tea if it will not make too large a package, also a pocket handkerchief. If you cannot send them now send them at the next opportunity. They will reach me all right.

The 1st Conn. is having rather an easy time compared to ours.

Will you please tell Mrs. Watts that I have Robert's bible and will send it to her at the first opportunity. At present, I have nothing to wrap it in. I will take as good care of it as possible until I can send it.

I wrote a letter to Aunt Julia Smith giving an account of Lyman's death. As I had no postage stamps, I marked it, "Soldier's Letter." If it has not reached her, tell her I marked a board with my knife with his name and regiment and put it up at his grave.

I did not see Lyman's body after the charge but Charley did. Lyman was buried in the same grave with Sergt. Parks near the place where they fell.

He was shot in the head and breast. Lieut. Cogswell saw him when he fell and says that he never knew what hit him.

When his body was found his pockets had been picked. His watch was gone. He had but \$5 in his pockets. I could not find his knapsack. In his portfolio were some fifteen pages of letters. That is lost also.

The officers are doing their best to get heavy guns for this regiment. I don't know as they will make out anything but they live in hopes of better times.

If Richmond should be beseiged we would have all the artillery we might want.

It is hard to tell when Sunday comes down here. The same amount of marching and moving of troops is going on. Officers are riding back and forth.

I must draw this to a close.

All we can do is to put our trust in the God of Battles and keep up good courage.

I hope this will be the last fight and campaign in Virginia.

Every day I see one or more wounded or some one killed. Now and then stretchers go by with wounded.

Oh! War is the most terrible thing that was ever invented by man. None but those who have gone through a fight can form a correct idea of one.

Letter #131

Headquarters of 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery
Army of the Potomac--4 miles south of
Petersburg, Va. June 24, 1864

Dear Father,

I received a letter from you this morning dated the 19th and 20th. I think that I have received every letter you have written me since I left Belle Plain.

I wrote to you about the 5th of June and three or more letters since then. I don't know how it is that Aunt Smith got my letter and you not have one from me.

We are now somewhere south of Petersburg in the pine woods. It is dead level all around here and very dry. It is hard to find water enough to drink and what we do find is of such poor quality your cattle would go without for some time before they would use it.

The soil is clay. The water, most of it, is as white as milk. Let a quart of it stand over night and the mud will be from 1/3 to 1/2 inch thick in the bottom. So you can see what sort of water we have.

The way we use it is, put coffee and sugar in it, let it soak well. Then it is very good.

Our rations are hardtack, pork, coffee, sugar, potatoes, rice, beans, and fresh beef. The only trouble is we do not stay long

enough in one place to cook properly.

Last night was the first time we have slept for five nights. After sundown we began to throw up breastworks. Got them partly done when we were ordered to leave them. We fell back and other regiments took our places.

After marching about a mile we halted and thought we would stay there for the night. Some of the men had spread their blankets when the order came to "Fall In." We were marched back very near to the place from which we started and very quickly too.

Here we halted spread out blankets and slept until 3 o'clock in the morning when we got up to cook breakfast so as to be ready to move at 4.

I cooked my breakfast of salt pork, fresh beef, coffee, with hardtack, filled my canteen with rather poor water and was ready to move but we did not march.

About 8 o'clock we heard heavy cannonading with now and then a volley musketry. This lasted until nine when it died down. From that time until now there has been nothing more heard.

It is now about noon and very hot--not much breeze stirring.

I have intended to write you what happens as much as possible. I have forgotten where I left off but think it was when we were on the north side of Petersburg. We are now on the south side of it.

I think it was the night of the 21st that we came off the skirmish line where we had been for twenty-four hours. We were relieved by the other half of the brigade.

We marched to the rear a short ways and dug ourselves rifle pits which took most all of the night. We lay there all of the next day.

At night we got up and marched to the east and south side of Petersburg. The march was all of ten or twelve miles.

We halted about three o'clock in the morning of the 22nd, spread our blankets and slept until sunrise when we marched a mile or more threw out skirmishes and advanced through the small pines and underbrush for about a mile. We stopped and began to throw up breastworks.

Our skirmishes opened and were answered by rebel sharpshooters. Their shots told fatally in three instances. Corp. Miner of Co. C. was killed, one in Co. K. and the other I did not learn about.

Col. Mackenzie was wounded in the forefinger. His hand at the time being raised to his head. Lieut. Hempstead formerly sergeant of our company was wounded in the breast, how badly I don't know. He has been sent back to the hospital. Also Lieut. Wright was wounded in the hand. I did not learn who the others were. I am told there were eleven in all.

We were moved to the rear and kept moving until 11 o'clock at night when we were permitted to lie down but were not permitted to unroll our blankets.

We slept until 3 o'clock when we were moved forward in line of battle, halted and laid in the woods until afternoon when we were moved to the right and laid there the rest of the day.

Today we have moved but once but guess we stand a good chance of moving around the bushes.

No losses that I can learn of yesterday.

There is a story that we have attacked and taken possession of the railroad and have torn up three miles of track. This was reported to have been done by the 2nd Vermont Heavy Artillery and that the rebels came up on a train of cars around a bend and stopped. A heavy body of Rebs got between our men and the picket lines and some say took five hundred of our men prisoners.

The old soldiers say that this is the hardest campaign that the Army of the Potomac has ever known. We have done some of the fastest marching that was ever done by an army of this size.

I had thought I knew something about being tired and hungry but now I know I did not until the march from Meigs Hill to Hanover town and from there to Cold Harbor.

This marching in the sand is the hardest kind. The dust is as thick as a dense fog. You could not tell who the man was ten feet away.

Sometimes we had to march almost all night without water. When marching from Chesterfield to Hanover town--fourteen to fifteen miles--I drank only twice. We halted in the morning beside a stream of clear water.

I believe all the boys who lived through the fight, except the wounded, are now with the company.

Thomas Beach has been unwell most of the time. Is now in the division hospital. He has been lame with rheumatism and was not in the fight. Goodwin Osborne has been detailed as commissary clerk. He is well. James Osborne is feeling about as well as the best of us. Ferris, Seth, and Edwin Pond are well as is also Frank Bunnell. I suppose Frank has written home about the daring deeds he has done. He is a little braver than he ought to be for his own good.

Mr. Williams is well--has stood the harship much better than I thought he could. St. John is wounded in the leg and is in some hospital. Youngs stands the banging very well. Will Plumb is now with us. He has suffered from rheumatism but has ridden in the ambulance some of the time. We saw Seth Plumb a few days ago. At that time he was all right.

The day after we landed at Bermuda Hundred I saw a good many of the 1st Conn. They are having very easy times compared with us.

Col. Abbott is doing all he can to procure us a situation in the artillery. Lieut. Col. White said it had been all arranged for us to be turned into an artillery brigade with them. But higher powers than he or Col. Abbott will have a word to say about it.

If in the present campaign we should surround Richmond then no doubt we will have siege guns--not before.

Lieut. Potter is in the division hospital, sick with fever and ague. Have not heard about him in some time.

Sunday morning, June 26--

The mail has just come in and brought your letter of the 21st containing the needle book and other things which were just what I needed.

I would like to have you send a small pair of scissors and some sealing wax, if you have some. Then I can send Robert's bible to Mrs. Watt.

Today we are resting for the first time since we left the division. Have gone into camp. May stay here one night--may stay a

week. There is no telling what the 6th Army Corps will be doing. It is noted for it's fast marching.

Gen. Wright formerly commanded this division. He now commands the 6th Corps. Brig. Gen. Russell now commands the 1st division. He formerly commanded the 2nd Brigade.

If there is any particular place to be held or anyplace to be marched to the 6th Corps, 1st Division, 2nd Brigade, are the ones to do it. There is a saying in the brigade that they are the first in and the last out of entrenchments. They must bring up the rear and halt in front.

We are to have inspection and divine service at 5 o'clock this afternoon.

Letter #132

Camp 2nd C.V.A., July 2, 1864

Dear Father,

Your letter of the (illegible) found me almost down to the Weldon R.R.

The 6th Corps received the following order on the 29th of June. I heard the Adjutant General read it. "The 6th Corps will hold itself in readiness to move at a moment's notice."

In less than an hour we were on the move southward by the left flank. After going about three miles we struck the Jerusalem Plank Road or what was once a plank road. Now the planks are far between.

We followed this road for about three miles, then struck across the fields to the west gradually nearing the railroad. We reached it at about one at night.

We marched very slow as we had to wait for our trains to move. When we struck the railroad it was at Ream's Station. How far from Petersburg I don't pretend to know.

When we got there we found the troops who came before us at work tearing up the tracks. The way it is done is this.

They draw the men up in line. A joint is broken, the track turned over much as a plow would turn a furrow. Two parties work in opposite directions. The men keep moving along. The tracks fall apart and the ties are piled up with the rails on top. Fire is applied and much sorrow brought to the C.S.A.

We halted in some bushes. I lay down and slept until morning just as sound as any of you in your beds of down.

In the morning Will Plumb with a cup of coffee in one hand and a hardtack in the other awoke me. We sat down and ate our breakfast and then looked for water. This is not very plentiful.

On our way down there we passed through some wheat fields-- the finest I have seen in Virginia. It was just ready for the harvest but we walked over it and the horses ate all they wanted.

Reams Station, for the south, is quite a place. There was a small church, a few houses, a blacksmith shop and a few buildings besides the station house.

We lay in the brush all day, cooking, eating and looking for water.

Wille in one of his expeditions found some new potatoes and onions. Of course, we cooked these and with fresh meat, hardtack,

and coffee had a very good supper.

We are all becoming to be great coffee drinkers--beat the Turks. We have good coffee. Water is all that is lacking.

I don't know how many miles of track has been destroyed by the 6th Corps. The newspaper correspondants will tell that of course and you will know before or at least as soon as I who was there.

We started back the afternoon of the 30th. Marched until after dark then halted for the night in pine woods beside the plank road. (The cavalry held the railroad. Wilson's cavalry made a dash on the Danville road and as camp stories have it were all cut up. This I know but little about.)

We remained here all day of the 1st of July. Slept here all night and awoke this morning about four o'clock. Cooked breakfast of coffee, potatoes and onions (which cost, three for 25¢) and hardtack.

At five we had our traps on and fell in. We soon moved off the road and as usual were shoe deep in dust. It is just like walking in an ash heap. If one could climb one of the tall pines he could trace the line of march for some ways.

Nothing of unusual interest happened to us on the way down or back.

Now we are about a mile or more from our old camp ground. We are in the woods and have a good well of water for our company. If allowed to stay shall have very good times.

Sutlers have begun to bring their wares around. Such people will take advantage. They do here--cheese 50¢ per pound, lemons three for 25¢. Ginger cakes that usually sell 8¢ for a dozen fetch 50¢ for twenty cakes. Borden's condensed milk from 75¢ to \$1.00 per can. To us this is a very valuable article for coffee.

We are encamped behind very strongly built breastworks. If the rebels wish to test them they will have to move the brush out of the way. This would have to be done under fire.

The works are built of wood with earth thrown in front. Some of the nicest timber I have ever seen was cut down and laid up for the works.

You seem to think you are having very warm weather up in Connecticut. It is not a fractional part of the heat we have down here. It is almost impossible to move men when the sun shines.

After marching about five miles ones mouth will be so full of dust that you do not want your teeth to touch each other.

So long as we are here we will not trouble the rebels in our front as the lines of the two armies are some distance apart. Towards Petersburg the lines draw nearer each other.

We hear picket firing almost every night or some of the boys do. It does not often awake me if it starts after I am asleep.

Lieut. Tuttle returned to the company a few days ago having recovered from the wound in his head, which was not as bad as the doctors first thought.

Lieut. Potter is still in the hospital. Have not heard about him in some time so can't tell you how he is.

I am sorry to hear that Mason is no better.

All of the wounded have a dangerous time when recovering. A slight wound is sometimes as bad as a large one.

At Cold Harbor we found some rebel bullets that were made very

different from some I have seen. Some think they are poisoned. One that I found had a small chamber in the center and had a small wooden plug soaked in something to cause death.

These are warm times for us and I guess will be anxious times for the people of Richmond if their railroad is cut. I can swear as to the Weldon Road and hope the Danville Road is in the same excellent condition.

Yesterday I heard an officer, who has been in the army about the same length of time that we have, say there were three things left for Lee to do. One was to be starved out of Richmond, the other was to leave Virginia and if he did, he would leave behind most of his Virginia troops, the best in his army. The other was to fight Grant outside of his (Lee's) fortifications as Grant would not attack and fight Lee behind fortifications. If he came outside Grant would flank him and leave him in the dark.

Grant lays his plans for a good ways ahead.

Lee must do something before long as his provisions will not hold out always.

If the rebels could have gathered their harvest of wheat which is now ready and have a good corn crop they would be better off for provisions than since the war broke out. You have no idea of the amount of wheat and corn that has been planted.

The southern papers put on a cheerful face but I think if they look back and at the present the future must appear dark to most of them. However, they will hang on like a dog to a root.

Of late, the health of the company has been very good. We have a few who are just able to get around and keep up with the company.

Mr. Jones feels the death of his brother very much. He keeps with Wille and me most of the time. I cheer him up all I can.

Of our Happy Family only seven here in the regiment. They are Wille, myself, James Osborne, Jones, Bennett, Dwight Stone, and Theodore Vaill.

Of the company Goodwin, Charley Hinsdale and Barber are detailed to the commissary department so we lose their company. James Lyon takes care of Maj. Rice's horses. He has a good position and can keep out of the way of bullets. Joseph Bradley is a nurse in the hospital department, so is Theodore Sanford.

When we are on the march it is almost impossible for one to write even a short letter even though it be a welcome task. Eating is a very important matter for a man cannot march very far unless his stomach is properly provided for.

The people who live in this region say that this is not a very dry summer although a little rain would not hurt half as much as the Yankee Army does.

One of the women whom some of the boys came across on one of their foraging expeditions told them she hoped the war would end this summer and that Grant's army would do it.

In all of our marching through Virginia we have seen but few of the inhabitants. They left with most of their movable property. In some places we came across their ice houses. I made visits to a good many of them. I broke up the ice and put it in my canteen. It would last half a day.

The thing we most need now is vegetables such as onions and potatoes. Pickles are the greatest luxury a soldier can have.

Evening--

The bands are playing all kinds of military airs. The woods resound with trumpets and drums. The soldiers are busy cooking and eating their suppers. Wille and I have finished ours. Shall I tell you what we had? Perhaps it will be of interest--perhaps not. Well, we had rice and dried apples. The rice is the most troublesome thing to cook I ever saw. We use condensed milk with it which makes it very good. We are furnished only enough sugar for coffee. If we want more we have to get an order on the commissary from the officers--or anything else we cannot get when there are no sutlers around. This was the case on the march from Belle Plain to Cold Harbor.

Well, to commence where I left off. We finished with a drink of Virginia water and with hardtack. What we will have for breakfast remains to be seen. No doubt we will hold a council of war and decide.

Perhaps you at home think that we have a chance to see a large part of Gen. Grant's army. Some think the whole army can be seen by one pair of eyes from one point. That is not possible. The present line of battle is more than seventeen miles long. It would reach almost to New Milford. The lines are not straight but crooks more or less.

Most--yes all of the way--there are breastworks and at least one line of battle behind them.

Here troops are in two or more lines. They are massed more than I have ever seen before--more than a division.

When a whole corps is seen it is a large body of men. Our corps when in one line of battle would reach more than four miles I think. Of course, that is seldom done even on the march.

The way we usually march is for one division to halt in the middle of the forenoon, let the others pass by then follow. When the others halt pass by them and so on.

If I come home I can beat any of your peddlers in carrying a pack, if I am rested. They rest oftener than we and do not carry so large a pack.

All that I possess in the clothing line is one extra shirt, one extra pair of stockings, rubber blanket, shelter tent, canteen and haversack which at present is stuffed to its utmost capacity as we have drawn rations which are to last until the 5th of July.

You wanted to know what bridge we crossed. I think it was Jones Bridge twelve miles from Richmond.

I must say goodbye for the night.

Fourth of July--

The day commenced with a slight sprinkling of rain and an occasional boom of cannon from the neighborhood of Petersburg. We were rather expecting a few national salutes to be fired in the rebels direction on the Glorious Fourth to remind them that there was a Fourth of July and that it had arrived again.

Yesterday was Sunday with you but with us it was the same as any week day. Three companies of our regiment had to work strengthening the breastworks. It was very hot and the men could do but little, but that little had to be done for here as elsewhere every little helps.

The Sabbath passed with nothing of importance happening. In

the evening the chaplain held a prayer meeting. The band played Coronation and the men sang "All Hail" etc. The band also played Ortonville. Prayers were made by the chaplain and a few others.

I was very tired and sleepy as I had been up since 3 A.M. and had worked all day. I could not keep my eyes open and so went to sleep. There were a good many of our regiment at the meeting.

This morning when I awoke it was trying to rain but dried up in a few minutes. It has been so long since we have had rain that I have forgotten how a rainy day would seem. It would be very refreshing to the army.

The weather is quite cool, the coolest day we have seen in a long time. The sky is cloudy and the wind is blowing quite strong from the north and if no military powder prevents we will rest ourselves.

I suppose you have all the particulars about our great raid on the Weldon R.R. The cavalry reported that the next night the rebels sent a large force down there with the expectation of preventing our rejoining the main body but the bird had flown. They went back.

I suppose they are at work repairing the road as fast as possible. However, they cannot run on it with safety as Gen. Sheridan is here with some twenty-five or thirty thousand of his cavalry.

I suppose you remember Lieut. Hempstead who was a sergeant in our company and in my tent. He was wounded in the breast on the 21st when we were skirmishing near where we are at present. At the time it was thought his wound was not dangerous. He was sent to City Point. Since then we have heard the sad news of his death. It does not seem possible that he is dead.

Of the three sergeants who were made lieutenants only one is alive--Dwight Kilbourn. He is as well as any of us.

Lieut. Hatch is missing. When last seen at Cold Harbor he was going over the breast works with our men. Some say he was wounded but as yet we have learned nothing about him. I think he was badly wounded and the pain made him crazy so that he did not know where he was going and so got into the rebel lines before he or any of us knew it. Perhaps he is alive and a prisoner.

A few days ago I received a letter from cousin Mary Ferris and one from Uncle Fred and Aunt Maria dated May 15th giving the news about them.

The woods around here are filled with troops. The underbrush has been cleared away and camps laid out in regular order. Bands are playing and men cooking coffee, etc.

The army is a hard place for a man to live in and be at all comfortable. There are so many things which have to be done regardless of the time day or night. The order comes and must be obeyed, there is no delay. It is different now than formerly. All from a general down to a corporal dare not disobey the orders of Gen. Grant. It will not do for them to try it more than once or they will find out their mistake.

How long we will act as infantry we do not know or how long we shall be in the field. Some think we will have to serve a hundred days only but there is no telling. I don't think there will be very much done this summer unless Lee undertakes to leave Richmond.

But I must begin to draw this long letter to a close or it will not be very interesting to you. Too much of a good thing is good for nothing.

I have written this with ink as I happened to get hold of some and it saves lead pencils which are rather scarce and cost no small sum.

I have not sent any money home for the reason that we have lived on the plainest of army rations ever since we left Belle Plain. We drew one ration of soft bread and bought a loaf. That is all the extras the government has furnished us. We get condensed milk with canned preserves. Now and then lemons and onions. Three of the former or five of the latter for 25¢.

Give my love to all of the friends. Tell Phill I think (illegible) wrote him an answer sometime back. There is no regular mail going out from here. We move so much. Please remember me to all of the uncles and cousins and to mother and all the family. Please all write.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. The boys send their best respects.

CHAPTER 7

Shenandoah Valley Campaign (July 12, 1864-November 30, 1864)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On July 11, a Confederate force under General Jubal Early invaded the suburbs of Washington. The next morning, Bissell's and another division of the VI Corps arrived in the capital to help the invalids, new troops, and clerks defend the city. Early's decision not to attempt a full scale assault after skirmishing around Fort Stevens indicated a fairly strong force to oppose him. As he retreated July 18, Grant ordered Wright and his VI Corps with a division of the IX Corps to pursue.

While the 2nd Connecticut was chasing Early across Maryland and Virginia and into the Valley, Sherman had fought his way to Atlanta. Back at Petersburg the Battle of the Crater was fought on July 30. But in the Valley, Early was having this way, ranging north to capture and burn Chambersburg, Pennsylvania at the end of July.

On August 1, Bissell had a new army commander, Major General Philip Sheridan. After continued marching and countermarching, Sheridan found and attacked Early at Winchester on September 19. At the Battle of Fisher's Hill on September 22, Sheridan inflicted a costly loss on the Confederates. Early, however, regrouped and vigorously attacked the Union army at Cedar Creek on October 19. Sheridan was absent from the field when the attack began and his army was almost routed. They recovered, perhaps due to Sheridan's appearance later in the day, and in turn routed the Confederates.

On Election Day, November 8, Lincoln with Andrew Johnson as his running mate easily defeated the Democratic nominee George McClellan. The former general had been nominated in late August and the Democrats had adopted in their platform a 'peace plank' which McClellan disavowed. Lincoln's reelection, for all practical purposes, ended what little hope the Confederates had for victory. Atlanta had fallen, Sherman had begun his march to the sea by mid-November, and though Grant was still stymied at Petersburg, Sheridan's success in the Valley meant seasoned reinforcements were on their way.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. Lewis Bissell survived his baptism of fire at Cold Harbor. Has he changed since then? Has combat been a rite of passage for Bissell? How are his letters about the Shenandoah battles different from his Cold Harbor descriptions? Has Bissell's

characterization of his enemy changed?

The army's journey through Maryland and Virginia and into the Shenandoah Valley showed Bissell a part of the country he had never seen before. How does he describe it? What ultimately is his role in the Valley? Are his actions congruent with his values? How does he justify his actions?

Bissell was promoted to corporal on August 1, 1864. What responsibilities went along with the higher rank? Does the promotion change his attitude towards the army?

Northern Society. Politics held everyone's attention in the North in the fall of 1864. Many historians believe that Sherman's victory in Atlanta ensured Lincoln's victory. Why would they make this statement? Theodore Vaill, Bissell's tentmate and historian of the regiment, advanced the idea that had the Union forces not defeated Early at Winchester, the Confederates could have taken the capital and this would have led to Lincoln's defeat. In Vaill's opinion, and Sheridan's too, the 2nd Connecticut was the principal force in defeating the rebels. Is the assumption that politics were determined by specific battles a safe one? How do you determine which battles had the greatest impact on the populace? When is it that war weariness translates into political defeat for the incumbent? What is needed in the war effort to keep hope of victory alive? With these questions in mind, what is the role of propaganda in the war? How did the Davis government deal with the dismal news of the fall of 1864?

The Army. What was the strategic importance of the Valley for the Union and Confederate forces? Why were previous Union attempts to control the Valley unsuccessful?

On a map, trace Bissell's journeys during the Shenandoah Campaign. What conclusions can you draw about the Union and Confederate armies and the style of warfare? In what ways is the Shenandoah Campaign a departure from the campaigns studied earlier?

Bissell relates a famous incident during the Valley campaign in which Lieutenant John Rodgers Meigs is killed. How did the Federals classify the death and what was their response? In general, were there many incidents of atrocities during the Civil War (Fort Pillow for example, letter #126)? Are atrocities a natural component of war? Do some wars spawn more atrocities than others?

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane

In his introduction to The Killer Angels, Michael Shaara writes: Stephen Crane once said that he wrote The Red Badge of Courage because reading the cold history was not enough; he wanted to know what it was like to be there, what the weather was like, what men's faces looked like. In order to live it, he had to write it.

This is a very important book in several ways. It is a great novel of war, specifically of the American Civil War; it is a triumph of American literary realism; it is one of the seminal works that has guided modern literary culture. Interestingly enough, Crane had had no direct experience of warfare, unlike Erich Maria Remarque or Ernest Hemingway. The factual detail is put together from various sources that Crane researched, most prominently Battles and Leaders of the Civil War. Certain passages, especially one concerning a panicked retreat, reflect this most clearly. The novel reads as the experience of a young unnamed narrator, and is an utterly convincing example of verisimilitude. Crane was born in 1871, and this book was published in 1895, yet the novel is a realistic and informed documentary of battle. It is also a work of art which shows us some horrifying truths about the confusion, courage and fear, and the maiming and killing, involved in warfare.

Crane's protagonist is not unlike Lewis Bissell; in fact, the parallels are remarkable, and you should explore them. The fiction of Crane and the real experience of Bissell can tell us much about life in general, values, and growing up. Battle for Bissell and Crane's narrator is a rite of passage, a terrifying journey into adulthood.

Remember that these are not exceptional experiences. Millions of young men have been involved in warfare throughout history, for varying reasons. Why is Bissell fighting in a war in which he has a very good chance of death or maiming? How are conditions different today? Improved medical knowledge has made a radical transformation of the situation. Many minor wounds in the Civil War would rapidly become infected and lead to the death of someone suffering an injury not unlike a cut finger. Does Bissell bring out in his letters the very poor chances of survival of a wound? Is there any comment on this in Crane? You should investigate The Life of Billy Yank and The Life of Johnny Reb in order to find statistics of casualty rates.

You will have observed in The Killer Angels that one of the narrators, Colonel Chamberlain, conceived of certain experiences of battle as 'glorious'. Is there any glory in Crane's observations on battle? Does Bissell have any notion of the concept "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (it is sweet and honorable to die for one's country)? Which author might be closest to the truth? Or, in fact, is each expressing his own version of the realities of warfare? You might also draw comparisons with All Quiet on the Western Front and The Sun Also Rises.

Crane's perspective on the war is unusual. This is a work of Realism. The narrator is not of high rank or social status, but is an ordinary young man, as is Lewis Bissell. The perspective on the story is shaped by the perceptions of a man, therefore, like Bissell, of lowly origins and commonplace concerns. Crane's use of language and setting reflects this; in particular, speech is colloquial, often little concerned with correct syntax or word usage. The author avoids melodrama and unnatural coincidence to further his plot, and he gives us a picture of a man helplessly caught up in a modern war, victim to forces totally beyond his control:

But he instantly saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from the regiment. It enclosed him. And there were iron bars of tradition and law on four sides. He was in a moving box. As he perceived this fact, it occurred to him that he had never wished to come to the war. He had not enlisted of his own free will. He had been dragged by the merciless government. And now they were taking him out to be slaughtered.

Can you estimate how Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species (the theory of evolution through natural selection) might have influenced the late nineteenth century? Might not men and women have felt that they were caught up in great patterns and movements beyond their control, and that there had to be a reappraisal of the nature of God, no longer omniscient and merciful? How might this have affected Crane's thought?

Your writing assignment for this chapter is an exercise in the technique of verisimilitude. Pick a closely observed historical account of one aspect of a battle (a retreat, a charge, the aftermath) and use it as a model for a piece of fictional writing. You may use Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, as did Crane, or The Face of Battle, one of the reading assignments in chapter eight. You might also wish to ask your history teacher for other references.

Chapter 7

The Shenendoah Valley Campaign
(July 12, 1864-November 30, 1864)

Letter #133

On the Potomac aboard the Rebecca Clyde
July 12, 1864

(Dear Father),

On our way from Petersburg to Washington.

Left our earth works six miles south of Petersburg on the night of Saturday July 9.

Marched toward City Point. The road was very dusty most of the way so much so that it was almost impossible to breathe. The road was filled with stumps on which we knocked our toes severely. Now and then a man would make a dive forward and grab for the ground. Not a few were bruised.

The forepart of the night we went very slowly but finally we got under full dog trot headway and away we paddled through the dirt.

We reached City Point about eight in the morning of July 10 it being Sunday. Here I saw Tom Beach and Charley Conger of my company who are sick and in the division hospital.

We remained here until six P.M. when our battalion was put on board the Rebecca Clyde and started down the James River enroute for Washington, D.C.

We steamed about thirty or forty miles then stopped for the night. Slept on deck or went through the motions, but got very little.

Got up in the morning and had some breakfast of hardtack, tea and crackers. The day was very warm as the sun shone but we had to do as we have done before so often, sweat and bear it.

The scenery going down the James is very pleasant or rather wild and romantic. The banks are well wooded. The river is said to be quite deep and the water is very clear. In some places the banks are bluffs.

We passed what they told us was Harrison's Landing. There is no place of interest or importance between there and Newport News. The latter was once quite a pleasant place to live in. The country around is very level and appears to be covered with a pine forest.

We passed Fortress Monroe. The sea wall is made of grayish granite. How high it is I could not tell. It encloses about sixty acres of land and is filled with trees. Looks as if it might be very pleasant.

Wednesday Morning, 13th--

The sun rose very clear and cool. The night was quite cool.

Last night at about eleven we were called up and marched to Battery Smeade and Fort Kearney. Here we stayed until morning then started back to our old camp of the night before. Here we are. All is quiet in the woods, no firing from the front.

Poolsville, Maryland, July 14--

We are now encamped here. This place is situated in one of the richest farming countries I have ever seen. Large farms are laid out and well fenced. They grow wheat and rye with plenty of fruit. The residences of the farmers are of the kind usually seen in the country.

July 15--

We are still in our camp of last night. This morning a rebel spy was hung close by us. He belonged to the 67th N.Y. Vol. He had on a suit of uniforms of union and rebel. He was picked up between the lines.

When he went up on the stage he sang and whistled but when he got there his face took on a serious look which was not easy for him to cast off. In a few minutes after his arrival he was led up on the scaffold attended by a chaplain who made a short prayer.

The rope was fastened around his neck a handkerchief tied over his eyes and in less time than it takes to tell it he was sent from time to eternity.

He dropped about six feet, struggled a good deal, but to no purpose, the rope shut off his wind.

This all came because he played the part of a traitor to his country. He died the death of a spy.

The men have now put up their tents and are resting themselves after their tiresome march in the boiling sun of a July day.

The march of yesterday was one of the hardest I have yet experienced. The roads were in good condition but the day was so hot. I raised two blisters on my feet. When we halted, I felt as if I could hardly move.

The Rebs and our advance cavalry had a brush close by our camp. I have not learned that anyone was hurt or got a scare.

Wille Plumb in his explorations found a woman from Connecticut. She lived in New Haven. Said she was going back as soon as she could get away from here.

The rebels took the cattle and horses clean through here. From one man they took over one hundred head of cattle. The reason being that some spy or treacherous neighbor told the rebels he had furnished the U.S. government with beef and hay.

Two regiments of our brigade have gone on picket down toward the ferry. It looks as if we would stay here for the night and I will stop writing for the night.

Sunday morning July 17th we spent resting for we were sadly in want of it if any army ever was. The men during the forepart of the day lay very quiet but in the afternoon were out looking for blackberries. These were found in large quantities.

Some of the men who could afford it went to some houses and bought biscuits, butter, and cheese, etc., at reasonable prices.

In the afternoon the chaplain of the 67th N.Y. held divine service in the woods close by us. Our band played and the men sang and all passed off very pleasantly. The day was very warm but the night was cool and chilly towards morning.

On the banks of the Shenandoah River
July 18, 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you have been looking for a letter from me for some

time. From present appearances you will not hear very soon. The reason is that there is no communication by mail with us. We have received no mail since July 9.

We are now twenty miles or there-about from Winchester.

We left Fort Stevens on the afternoon of the 13th and marched until 9 o'clock at night. The afternoon was very warm and it was hard marching although there was no dust. We marched on rough roads in which there was plenty of water.

While we were at Fort Stevens we had not a single opportunity to purchase anything. They would not allow us to go to the city nor allow anything to be brought out from the city.

We had no leisure time. Our regiment being heavy artillery had to be on hand and was kept busy.

The 14th we reached Poolsville, Md. Here we remained over night and the 15th.

The country through which we marched is the best I have seen since I left home. It is almost equal to that of Dutchess Co. N.Y. The land is hilly, well watered and has plenty of good woodland. It is free from stone. Post and rail fences are used.

Grass grows here as heavy as with you. I have seen some of the best meadows here that I have ever seen. There are few if any in Litchfield County that can raise stouter grass.

The wheat has been harvested and has been thrown up in stacks of five or six bundles. When dry it will be piled in larger stacks and later thrashed.

Corn is up above a man's shoulders. Some of it looks very nice, but rain is needed.

Poolsville is a small compact village about four miles from Edward's Ferry.

On the morning of the 16th we left Poolsville and marched in a northerly direction finally turned up at Conrad's Ferry. There we crossed the river.

The river is about one half a mile wide and from three to three and one half feet deep. The water runs quite swiftly and the bottom is covered with slippery stones. The men crossed holding up their ammunition traps. Now and then a man would fall down and go in all over musket and all. Then he would have to claw around until he found it.

Conrad's Ferry or ford is six miles from Poolsville.

We marched to the west of Leesburg, about two miles and halted over Sunday. Leesburg is or was a place of four thousand inhabitants. It is four miles from the Potomac and is in Loudoun County.

The country around was once very rich but since the war it has become surprisingly poor. It is hilly very much like Litchfield County. A few stones are scattered around, just enough to build fence corners. It is a good grass country the best I have seen in the south.

Houses are built of a brown stone, not such stone as you have but smaller. The stone is quarried out of ledges and is of all shapes.

A good many of the houses are built after the southern style having the chimney on the end and outside. Nearly every farm house has a spring house. These we walk into and fill our canteens with good cool water. Better water I have never tasted.

We rested over Sunday about two miles west of Leesburg and had little to disturb us. In the afternoon we attended divine service held by our chaplain and by the chaplain of the 67th New York.

The latter chaplain preached a funeral sermon for all who have been killed in battle since the opening of the present campaign. He took for his text the 6th and 7th verse of 2nd Timothy. Our band played and the men sang. After the services the band played a funeral march.

We left there the 17th and marched leisurely toward Snickers Gap. We had to halt and let the artillery pass.

At about 4 P.M. we commenced crossing. The road was rough.

After we left camp we passed through the village of Hamilton and another village whose name I have forgotten. It is between Hamilton and Snickers Gap.

Snickersville has about as many houses as Bradleyville. It is situated under the mountains.

We reached the west side and marched down and halted.

We heard firing and soon our own batteries opened from some high bluff close to the river.

We started on and soon met a good many of Hunter's men going to the rear. They had attempted to cross or had crossed and had thrown out skirmishers then formed line of battle in the rear. They became scared, broke and left the skirmish line. The Rebs charged and drove them into the river. Some were killed, some wounded, others drowned and a good many taken prisoners.

The 18th Conn. was in it. One of them told me a good many of the regiment were prisoners.

The Rebs threw four shells across the river killing and wounding about twenty of our corps. The losses of our side I have not learned.

Hunter has from eight to ten thousand men. Two divisions of the 19th Army Corps are coming up. I hear that the 12th Conn. is coming and that the 13th was in Washington. The 9th was left in New Orleans. If we see them we shall have seen all but six of the Conn. regiments, the 5th, 9th, 10th, 15th, 16th, and 20th.

I am pretty well although foot sore and tired from marching. I think we will see more marching before we see less.

Will Plumb is pretty well. Theodore has not been well but is much better now than he has been for some time. Mr. Williams is about the same as usual. Corp. Cables is well. Ed Seth and Ferris Pond are well.

Since we crossed the river we have had to forage for a living. That has been the order. The Quartermaster gives a receipt for everything--payment to be made after the war is ended.

A good many of Mosby's men live in the mountains.

This country is good for wheat, corn, and everything that you raise. I have seen some of the best gardens and orchards that I have ever seen and some of the snuggest farms one could ask to own.

They do not have as many barns as you have. The grain is stacked and thrashed by machine.

How many men there are in this department I do not know. There must be between twenty and thirty thousand--perhaps more. I hope we have enough to drive the rebels before us.

On the 15th we were but three miles behind their rear guard.

We found some of their fires still burning. I wish we could get them where they could not get away with their plunder as we are out of rations just now, the first time since we left Cold Harbor. I would not object to partaking of the plunder. But we expect the supply trains up today so we take courage and try to live.

A good many of our boys thought that when we got to Washington our campaign was over. They have found out that they were very much mistaken. I am in hopes that when our hundred days are up we will go into garrison or take a siege train. If they do one or the other, there will be no fault found but if not, then there will be some of the tallest grumbling ever heard.

What direction we will take from here is difficult to tell.

I know of nothing more of interest to write about so will close but hope I shall have time to add a postscript.

I hope I shall soon have the pleasure of hearing from you all.

I will endeavor to take as good care of myself as circumstances will permit.

I remain with much love your affectionate son,

Lewis.

P.S. Direct the same as usual.

P.S. I guess you will find it hard to keep track of the different parts of this letter or letters.

Some of it I wrote upon the Rebecca Clyde the rest just as opportunity presented itself along the march.

When we get in some place where we can stay long enough to turn around and permit me to collect my scattered thoughts, I'll write an outline of what I have seen.

July 20, 1864 --

Here we are at Snickers Ford. Have been here ever since the night of the 18th. How long we will stay in this vicinity or where we will go is a matter about which the common soldier knows very little.

Since we left Poolsville, Md., we crossed the Potomac at Conrads Ferry some six or eight miles up the river from Poolsville. When we reached the river bank a few rebels were to be seen on the opposite side. A battery was put in position and threw a few shells across. The cavalry crossed the Rebs left for parts unknown. Our regiment was first to ford the river which was half a mile or more wide. The water ran quite swiftly. The river bottom is covered with smooth slippery stones. Now and then someone would fall in all over. Then there would be some scrambling after a wet musket and straps much to the amusement of the other men.

The water was waist deep and ran quite swiftly.

After we had crossed we halted only long enough to get our things in shape. Then on we tramped as fast as our legs could carry us through the dust after Johnny Reb.

About noon the cavalry came in sight of their rear guard less than three miles distant.

We reached Leesburg about 4 P.M. halted for a short time then on we started. After a march of about three miles to the west of the city we halted for the night and over Sunday.

During the afternoon our company was thrown out on the skirmish line. Part of the afternoon we had it quite hard.

About a mile west of the city is a very high hill. Up on this we had to climb. When on top we were very tired but the view was well worth the trouble. Such a sight I have not seen before in my

travels in Virginia. We could see to the south thirty miles or more. In that direction the country is quite level and is covered with pine woods. To the southeast and east it is more hilly and open. Smug looking farms and farm houses appear among the trees.

Northeast and north it is more hilly and the land looks more thickly settled. Away in the distance is to be seen Sugar Loaf Mountain and Point of Rocks. To the northwest and to the southwest the view is limited. The country is very hilly and thickly settled. Some of the best farms in Loudoun County are located here.

East at our feet is the City of Leesburg of about four thousand inhabitants. It is situated in the midst of a level tract, a little hilly but no large hills. From a distance the streets looked well shaded and very pleasant. Perhaps distance lends enchantment to the view. Around the city are some very nice places, some of the pleasantest I have seen in a long time.

We halted for the night in a cleared wheat field with plenty of good water close by. Our men were very tired when we halted. I had raised two blisters on each foot during the day's march.

North of Georgetown, July 23, 1864--

Dear Father,

As I have a letter started for you, I shall now try and finish it.

Since we left here on the 13th we have marched over one hundred miles in the hottest season of the year. We have marched but one night.

We reached the Shenandoah River on the afternoon of the 19th-- lay on the banks all night and crossed the next afternoon (20th). We marched about four miles and halted.

About eight in the evening we turned back toward the river which we crossed at Snickers Ford (21st). After an all day march we crossed Goose Creek and stayed over night.

The next morning we started and that night we were encamped ten or twelve miles from Washington.

We were up the next morning before the moon and stars had stopped shining, cooked our coffee, put on our straps and were ready to start for Washington.

The entire corps was footsore and lame from marching with wet feet. I have three blisters on each foot. One is as large as a half dollar and more than skin deep.

But here we are. If we stay here all night it will be a wonder as the corps is under marching orders for some point.

Rations are being issued for five days including two days' rations of soft bread just out of the ovens.

If ever men were tired we were when we halted for the night, if we stay all night.

The Q.M. is issuing clothing. Everything looks like a move to some place.

Monday, July 24--

I guess you will think this is one of those letters that is hard to make head or tail of.

We reached here safely and if I had not been so busy should have started a letter home before this.

Yesterday being Sunday I thought that I should have time to finish this but just as I got ready to commence operations, Adj.

Vaill wanted me to go to Washington with him and others to Maj. Ladd's office (our paymaster) and assist in making out the pay rolls.

We worked all day as fast as possible and if we remain here a day or two will be paid off, but we are under marching orders all of the time.

The city was very quiet. The stores were closed and for a great city Sunday was well kept.

The day is rainy. It commenced last night. I was made aware of it by a few drops falling on my head. We scrambled around and protected ourselves from the rain then lay down and slept as only tired soldiers can.

There is no other news to write about just now.

There was an order for some of the brigades of this division to move but the storm countermanded it so the poor fellows slept on. There are no signs of the corps moving.

We are encamped on high ground four miles north of Washington.

I must begin to taper down toward closing. Shall have to adjourn "sine die."

I will try in my next (as a correspondant would say) to give you a more correct description of our march after the Rebs through Maryland and across the Blue Ridge and the Shenandoah Valley.

We went within twelve miles of Winchester. We traveled the pike from Leesburg to Winchester. It was hard marching.

I must say goodbye. Am feeling more like myself and shall soon feel better still. Most of the men have sore feet and lame legs.

How long we will stay is more than a soldier can tell.

Give my love to all the family and friends from your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

July 29, Three miles west of Harpers Ferry--

Since I last wrote it has been a long time--how long I do not know. I have been so busy since we arrived in Washington I have found it impossible to mail a letter home. I have rested but two and one half days since the 12th of this month. We passed through Harpers Ferry this afternoon and are now encamped for the night. Wille Plumb, Mr. Williams, James Osborn and all of our company are well. We are about worn out with hard marching and have sore feet.

At Washington I received four letters. Have had but one mail since the 12th of July. Sunday the 24th I was busy all day making out pay rolls. Monday we marched across the river to Ft. Tillinghast from which we left the next afternoon to join the corps.

We did not catch up until the 28th at Frederick, Maryland. We crossed the Monocacy and marched to Jefferson that night.

You can judge for yourself as to the time we have had in which to write letters or do anything except rest. So you must excuse me for not writing before this. But it has been my earnest wish to let you know how I am and how I am getting along.

I feel about worn out so do all the rest of the men in the regiment.

I received the articles you sent me and am very thankful for them. They are what I was in want of. If you can send a few needles, I wish you would as those you sent me got wet and are rusted.

The postage stamps are just what I needed. They cannot be

bought here so I shall have to look to you for them.

I have had money enough and should have now but I lent some. We have not been payed off yet so they have been unable to pay up. So at present I am out of money. If you can send me \$5 (in greenbacks) I shall be very glad.

I must close as it is getting late in the evening.

Give my love to all the family.

Direct as before to 1st Division 2nd Brigade 6th Corps.

Please write as soon as possible.

We have marched through a splendid farming country.

Letter #134

Camp at White Oak Spring, Md.

Three miles from Frederick City

between it and Harpers Ferry August 1, 1864

Dear Mother,

I suppose you have been looking for a letter from me.

Since we landed in Maryland I hardly have had time to take a long breath. We have been on the march constantly except for a day and a half. How far we have marched I cannot tell. You can go to the map but that will give you about two thirds of the distance we usually travel. We crook around a good deal, partly, I suppose, because of military strategy, to gain some advantageous ground.

The roads are not much like yours. In some places there are regular built roads. Most of them, instead of leading over the top of a hill, go around. This makes the distance greater than with you.

Our march from Washington to Frederick was quite easy but after we got there and joined the brigade we had to march about ten miles more before we could sleep.

We started from Fort Tillinghast in the afternoon of the 26th of July. From that time until now we have marched over sixty-five miles in five days and during the hottest part of the year.

We reached Frederick, Md., on the night of the (28th) after crossing the Monocacy River in the afternoon.

I pulled off my shoes and stockings, rolled up my pants, and got across dry. Put them on again and traveled until we reached Jefferson, a small village between Frederick, Md. and Harpers Ferry.

Jefferson has as many inhabitants as Bantam but is very compact. It has a few stores, a shoe shop, and a blacksmith shop.

The country from Washington to the Ferry is the finest I have ever seen. In times of peace the land brought from \$40 to \$160 an acre. So you may judge if it will raise anything.

This season is very dry so we cannot see how productive the land can be made. Corn is looking spindling. The ears have not set although the corn in some fields is much higher than you can reach. I have found a few ears nearly large enough to roast.

The land lies very much the same as in Dutchess Co. N.Y. only there are a few more stones and ledges of rock. The stone is used for building houses, barns and spring houses.

This is the greatest country you ever saw for springs of cool water. You seldom find anything like it in Connecticut. I have never seen better water.

The farms have not been pastured as much as you pasture yours

for the cattle have been run off by the rebels. Cattle is the poorest property a man can have here. Horses are not to be bought or sold as the rebels can run them off very easily.

They did not leave horses enough to do the work, took all of the best and left all of the old broken down ones.

Corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes are the usual crops. Apples are very plentiful, the trees hang full. The peach trees are bowed down, the limbs bend almost to the ground. The peaches are not half grown yet. They are fall peaches. Yesterday I found a tree, in an orchard, on which the peaches were almost ripe.

It would astonish you to see how our men eat green apples without serious effect. We have so much salt pork, hardtack, etc. and no vegetables except what we can buy along the road, when we have money to buy with.

Potatoes are very small. They are about the size of walnuts. I have seen some larger but not many. The apples are winter fruit mostly, some fall fruit but no early fruit.

On the road up from Washington we passed through the village of Rockville. It is some larger than Bantam and Bradleyville put together. It is a dirty looking place, to my eye. The village next to Rockville is Hyattstown, about as large as Bantam. This place was much neater in appearance.

We camped near some good spring almost every time.

We reached the Monocacy River about sunset.

The country around Frederick is equal to the best land in Connecticut. The city is situated on a level tract. The country is not hilly until you get near Harpers Ferry. Here it rises into mountains.

On the road to Harpers Ferry we passed through Jefferson, Petersville, and Sandy Hook then the river.

Now about Harpers Ferry.

As you approach the place from Frederick you come up on a rise of ground that gives a good view of the country before you, clear to the foot of the mountains. These rise up much higher than the Catskills. The rocks are piled on each other so that they form a very steep wall.

Sandy Hook is situated at the foot of the Maryland Heights, whose summit is crowned with a fort over which the Stars and Stripes is flying.

We marched along the road which led to the Ferry. It is a very cramped place. There is hardly room for the canal, railroad and wagon road. In some places between the river and the foot of the mountains it was necessary to blast for the roadway.

The railroad bridge across the river is built of iron and is a splendid piece of workmanship.

We crossed the Potomac on a pontoon bridge and climbed up into the city. On our way we passed the very building in which old John Brown fought and bled for the negro's cause.

All that is standing are the walls. I could see very little of it because of the cloud of dust which rose along the line of march.

Most of the houses were deserted. Windows were minus sash and glass. Now and then we saw holes through the walls where a cannon ball had passed.

From the stylish appearance of some of the houses they were occupied by the aristocracy.

Part of the city is built down by the river and part on high ground--a bluff. Some of the streets are almost on top of each other. One can look out of the chamber windows of one house into the street windows of the house above. The houses look as if they would fall into the river.

We found the streets filled with soldiers, mules and wagons. It almost was the hottest marching I have ever had.

After climbing the hill we stopped and rested awhile then started in the direction of Charles Town. In a place called Halltown we halted, encamped on an old camp ground, stayed all night, drew rations for five days, packed up and started for the Ferry.

We climbed what is called Bolivar Heights.

On the march up there a good many men fainted from the heat.

Fred Jennings and Wille Plumb fell out from our company. The doctor gave them a pass to the ambulance train but it was full and they could not get in. Corp. Cables and James Osborne went along to see them safely in but as they could not get them in had to help them along. Wille they lost track of before they crossed the river. He said he would go to the hospital there and report to the doctor who would give him papers to help him along.

Fred Jennings came up with the company today. He is about sick but able to be with the company.

Tuesday morning, August 2nd--

Slept under a tree in a yard last night with nothing over me but the leaves. It was very warm. The day had been almost the hottest I have ever seen.

This morning is cloudy and much cooler.

I think we will move from here sometime today.

The road is very dusty, all of three inches deep. The farmers say they have never seen such dry times in a good many years.

I suppose a description of the people and the place where I am staying will do to fill out the remainder of this page.

There are six in the family, the man and his wife are about forty years of age. They have two daughters, one fifteen or sixteen, the other twelve or thirteen. There are two young men about twenty-five years of age.

The farmer looks and acts very much like Mr. Kilbourn. He is an active and wide awake man. His wife is about your age and is a very pleasant kind hearted woman. Is short, rather fleshy and keeps everything about the house in perfect order.

They make butter but no cheese.

The market in times of peace is one of the best in the state being in the vicinity of the Baltimore and Ohio R.R. with Frederick on one side and Harpers Ferry on the other.

All of the people in this vicinity appear very kind to the soldiers and do a good many things for them.

All of the ovens around here are in full blast baking pies, cakes, bread, and biscuits to sell.

Milk is in great demand. Butter sells from 50¢ to 60¢ per pound, chickens 50¢ each.

The regiments that were payed off before we started out this last time live much better than we do who are without money.

Our rations arehardtack, pork, coffee, and fresh meat every day or two.

As most of the corps have been marched pretty hard when they can get anything besides government rations they are very sure to have them.

I have sat down to a table and eaten like a civilized person. It makes it seem a little more like old times and home.
(not signed)

Letter #135

Three miles from Harpers Ferry, August 7

Dear Father,

I received your letter of August 1 on the night of the 5th. It seems like a long time since I have heard from home but the mails do not come regularly. We have had but few since we left Washington.

I have found it almost impossible to get time for writing to you or anyone else.

A week ago today we started from here to go back to Frederick. I think I have written you since then.

The movements of our troops here are more than I can make out. We left our camp at White Oak Springs, Wednesday morning, marched down, crossed the Monocacy River and went into camp here.

We stayed until Friday night. After going to bed we had the pleasure of getting up and packing up. We had the further pleasure of crossing the river not on a bridge but on the river bottom.

I pulled off my shoes and stockings, rolled up my pants, and got over dry. The water was not cold but cool.

We marched all night and reached Jefferson before the people had got their breakfast. We passed on to Petersville and halted for breakfast and rested until eleven o'clock then set out for Harpers Ferry.

It rained for an hour to two and looked like a rainy day. The rain laid the dust and raised a little mud. Toward noon it stopped, the sun shone and was very hot at times.

A good many fell out, overcome with heat, on the march through Sandy Hook and Harpers Ferry. It is a very narrow place between the mountains and there is but little air, so when the sun shone the men suffered more than ever.

What direction we take from here I am and I guess the generals are unable to tell.

The rebel force for the invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania is estimated at from fifty to seventy-five thousand. That force is somewhere in the Shenandoah Valley. We are waiting to see in what direction they start.

There is quite a large body of rebel cavalry roaming around Sharpsburg in Penn.

Some of our boys say they saw Gen. Grant down in Harpers Ferry when we came through there yesterday. Said he had three stars on his shoulder straps, was wearing a straw hat and sitting in a chair smoking a cigar. But perhaps they were mistaken and imagined the extra star.

Corp. Cables is not well. The march of yesterday made him sick. There is a hospital at Harpers Ferry where the sick are sent.

I heard from Wille Plumb yesterday. He is in Camp Parole Hospital, Annapolis, Md. I suppose he has written home so that his people know where he is.

I don't know what move we will make next but think it will be up the river toward Sharpsburg or Hagerstown as the rebel forces appear to be greater in that vicinity than elsewhere.

The 19th Army Corps is encamped not far from here. The 12th and 13th Conn. are here. Last night I saw one of the 13th who belongs in New Haven. He said Capt. Frank Wells was with the regiment.

How strong the corps is I don't know neither can I find out.

I estimate our army here at from twenty to forty thousand strong besides the cavalry under Averell. How strong his force is I do not know. Who is in command of the department, I am unable to learn. I suppose Gen. Wright is in command but whether of our corps or over all I am unable to tell.

When last we left Washington we did not think we would stay out very long but now I think that so long as there is so large a rebel force as is supposed we may not go back until fall or winter. Perhaps we will go back in a few days.

The one hundred day mens' time is about out and someone must take their places so there is some chance of going back, much better than if we were down at Petersburg, Va.

We do not have very cheering news from there just now but hope it will soon turn into good news.

Fruit is beginning to ripen. We found some apples that were ripe and in a few days corn will be large enough to roast. Then we will have some. We stew green apples in grease which helps our poor rations some.

Mr. Williams is well. Jones is not very well.

Goodwin Osborn, James Osborn, Ferris, Seth and Ed Pond are well.

Capt. Shumway is in command of our company.

I received the bundle with the pocket handkerchiefs, yarn, etc., also the letters with scissors. They all arrived when we were at Washington.

Tell Phill to get and send me one of Faber's No. 3 lead pencils. I want one with a hard lead if possible. The sutlers have pencils to sell but they are poor things. He can send it in a letter.

As there is a mail going out in a few minutes shall finish in a hurry.

I am feeling quite well and smart after our last march of twenty-five miles which we did in less than sixteen hours.

Give my love to mother and all of the family.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

Tell Mrs. Watt that if there is anything more she wants to know about Robert that I can tell will gladly furnish her with it.

Yours in haste.

Letter #136

Cedar Creek, August 13, 1864

Dear Father,

We have halted for no certain length of time so will start a letter to you.

We broke camp on the east side of the creek this morning, forded it and have marched a mile or so beyond. Are now waiting orders.

We can hear cannonading in the distance and suppose it to be that of our mounted battery which is with the cavalry.

Yesterday we passed through the villages of Newton and Middletown. As I have no map to refer to cannot give you the locality so you must look it up for yourself.

We left the vicinity of Harpers Ferry on the 10th inst., passed through the village of Charlestown where old John Brown was hung. It is a God-forsaken place to look at. Nearly all of the buildings have been partly destroyed at least. Some were once very stylish looking.

We halted for the night on the road half a mile from water. The second thunder storm we have had in our Shenandoah campaign passed over us.

The next day, August 11, we marched about twelve miles or more and encamped close by an old mill. We had water on each side of us.

There was a flock of sheep on the hills close by. The boys butchered all they wanted and had mutton for supper and breakfast.

The morning of the 13th was very hot. We started about 7 A.M. Water was scarce. It was very dry all along the way. The streams are dry. The men suffered for water.

The land is quite level, there are some rocks and some stone walls.

(illegible) the Blue Ridge on our left and the Alleghanies on the right.

We passed through the villages of Newtown and of Middletown and encamped for the night on the banks of Cedar Creek.

This morning we forded the stream and have marched a mile or two from it where we are halted awaiting further orders.

Last night we heard picket firing, supposed to be that of the Rebs and our advance picket line.

The men are getting rather short of rations. They will be out tonight. One brigade of our division which is guarding our supply train reports that they have but eight days' rations in the train.

There are three army corps in the valley the 6th, 8th and 19th besides a part of Sheridan's cavalry.

The rebel force is reported to be thirty thousand strong. Our cavalry had a fight with them day before yesterday. Yesterday they could see their wagon trains in the distance. They were getting them off as fast as possible.

Where we will halt or what is our destination we do not know but all think and say it will be Lynchburg.

Gen. Sheridan is in command of all of these forces.

I don't think we will see the "Defenses" until winter. I feel certain we will not until after this expedition is over and don't know how long this will last.

Perhaps you may get this sometime. There are no communications with the rear at present.

I suppose you will hear from Theodore. He was left behind at Harpers Ferry, sick. I did not know he had been left behind until the next day.

I am, at present, well and better than I have been. Corp. Cables is much better and is with the company. All of our men who are with the company are not so lame or sick but that they are able to march.

We have the fewest falling out on the march of any company in the regiment. The regiment loses as few as any for its numbers in the division.

How large an army Gen. Sheridan has I could not even guess for I have seen nothing but our own corps and part of the 19th corps.

I saw Capt. Frank Wells the day before we left Harpers Ferry. He had changed some in his appearance since I saw him when he went out with the 13th Conn.

I saw some of the boys who belong to the 12th and 13th Conn. Vols. They say that those who have re-enlisted are home on thirty days' furlough. They have escaped some of the hottest marching that troops have seen since this war broke out.

A good many of the old soldiers who have been out three years say that this is the hardest campaign they have seen. They do not stand the hot marches much, if any, better than our regiment. If any regiment is known throughout the corps ours is. Wherever we are we are recognized as the "Second Heavies." In marching through Washington and all through Maryland it was remarked that we were the best looking regiment they had ever seen. I have heard officers say the same. I guess that is one thing that keeps us here. In some places in Maryland the people said that we behaved more like men and soldiers than any that had been by. But this is praising one's self.

I wrote you that some of the boys said they had seen General Grant the day we passed through Harpers Ferry. Well, they did see him. He made a short visit and left.

We were sorry to hear of the repulse at Petersburg but hope we will soon hear of the capture of Atlanta by Sherman. This will take away or prevent an increase in the force in our front.

Apples are beginning to ripen. We have been roasting green corn while we have been awaiting orders.

As it is getting late in the afternoon, I think we will move far from here tonight. We did not get within nine miles of Winchester. I don't know how near Berryville we were. We turned to our left six or seven miles from Charlestown. Perhaps I am mistaken.

Almost all of the people in this vicinity are very strong rebels. We would ask them how far ahead the rebels, or as the boys usually call them "Johnnies" were. They would answer that the Confederates went through at such a time. They never would call them "Rebs".

Some of the nicest farms and houses I have ever seen are here. The barns look shabby and most of them are made of logs.

They can raise as good grass and as heavy as you on the best meadows you have.

Sunday morning, August 14--

We are now on the north side of Cedar Creek. Came here last night. Drew three days' rations to last four.

We are all well.

Yours affectionately,
Lewis

Letter #137

Charlestown, Virginia August 19, 1864

Dear Father,

As there has been but one mail in and one out from the corps since the 11th, I have heard but once from the outside world and I guess the outside world has heard but once from me, if at all.

When I last wrote you we were on the banks of Cedar Creek, two miles from Middletown, Va.

We left there in the night of August 17th. Our company was on picket at the time and a half mile from camp. The corps left at about eleven o'clock at night, so did we but we had to march very fast to catch up with them which we did about daylight.

We took the road leading to Winchester, Va. A mile south of the city near a mill we halted and cooked breakfast. We marched through a part of the city and took the pike leading to Berryville.

I suppose I must not pass over Winchester without saying something about it, either praise it or condemn it. As far as the inhabitants are concerned, they will get the latter from me.

The country around Middletown is one of the richest farming sites. One seldom sees better anywhere in the valley.

Some of the farms have nice stone walls with plenty of good springs and woods. The houses are very nice, a good many are built of brick. Now and then one sees an old log house.

Nearly every farm house will be found near a spring no matter where the road may be.

I must stop for a short time as the boys are fetching in flour from a mill not far off and I, of course, must have some for pancakes, which for a change is better than hardtack.

I suppose that with my quill (for I am writing with a goose quill pen. The quills I picked up one day where someone had picked the feathers from a goose. Necessity is the mother of invention in the army as well as out of it). I must give you something of a sketch of what I have seen since we left our camp at Harpers Ferry.

We left there on the morning of August 11th. That day we got along very well. The line of march lay through groves of woods. They were the nicest groves I have seen. Most of them were oak. You do not have such groves of oak. I would be willing to camp in some of them for a month or more rather than march in the hot sun.

We reached Charlestown memorable for being the place where John Brown was confined in jail and hung. I do not know just where he was hung. It was about half a mile out from the town but I am ignorant of the direction.

The town is laid out in regular order the streets running at right angles with each other. But if I am allowed an expression it is one of the most God-forsaken looking places I have been in in all of my marching.

I saw the courthouse but did not recognize the jail.

We marched all day, the sun shining down very hot. In the afternoon the men fell out by hundreds. The heat was almost more than one could endure. We went into camp about six miles from Berryville. Here we stayed all night and rested our weary bones.

We started the next morning about five o'clock leaving Berryville on our left about two miles. Marched until noon, halted for awhile then turned to our left.

We marched over very level country in which water was scarce.

We halted in a valley and had a mill race on one side and a creek on the other.

There was a flock of sheep on the hills close at hand. Some of the men in the regiment as soon as they dropped their knapsacks caught up their muskets. Soon there was a lively skirmish and for supper the whole brigade had mutton.

Men could be seen coming in with sheep hanging by its joints from a musket. They divided, of course, with their comrades for when a man goes foraging he gives away what he cannot eat or carry.

On the morning of the 13th we were up on the wing. Toward noon we could hear firing in our front and supposed it to be that of our cavalry and the Rebs rear guard. We came up to the place about one o'clock and found a sergeant of cavalry mortally wounded in one of the houses in charge of our surgeons.

We reached Newtown about three P.M. We did not march through the town but around it so did not see it except from a distance. It looked very well, however, "distance lends enchantment to the view."

After passing the town we struck the road leading to Middletown and Strasburg. It is one of the best pikes I have seen.

Toward evening we marched quite fast as it was some cooler and a fresh breeze blew from the south. We reached Middletown about sundown but did not halt. Passed by--marched two miles where we found the 19th Corps camped.

Here we halted, cooked coffee, spread our blankets, and slept until morning.

I was awakened by the crowing of a rooster belonging to a battery. There are several roosters among the batteries and baggage wagons. When on the march they ride on the wagons or on the horses backs.

The morning of the 13th we forded Cedar Creek and marched two miles or more where we halted in some woods and waited further orders.

There was a large field of corn nearby. The corn was brought in by arms full and roasted for we were out of rations and it was our day to draw.

We remained here until 10 o'clock at night when we got up and started back at a quick pace, recrossed the river, went back to our camp and drew rations for three days.

Sunday morning the mail carrier said a mail would go out in ten minutes. I flew around and sent a letter home to you.

Also I received one from you, one from Wille Plumb and one from Mary Ferris.

We rested here all day and were told that perhaps we would have to make our rations last four days instead of three. It was rumored that some of our supply trains had been captured by Mosby.

Monday we packed up and moved half a mile to a much better place near a spring. If I had it up home I would not take \$300 for it. It runs a stream as large as the brook in your meadow. I have seen some as large again and cold enough to make ones teeth chatter.

Here we stayed all night.

Tuesday morning we busied ourselves getting all the dirt off and cleaning up. Five companies were sent out on picket to relieve four companies who had been out three days.

At eleven at night we were ordered to be ready to march as the Corps was moving back toward Winchester. We started, crossed the creek and hurried after our brigade, which we reached about daylight.

We passed through Middletown and Newtown and reached the halting place about a mile from Winchester.

Here we were to halt an hour for breakfast but stayed two hours and cooked what little we had.

We passed through the famous city of Winchester. Grass and weeds were growing in the middle of the streets. It was once a flourishing place--the center of trade for the valley.

Here lived Mason, the old rebel minister to England. I saw his shanty at a distance. If I had passed by it should have been tempted to have thrown a stone at it.

We took the road leading toward Berryville and marched until about sundown when we came to a halt and went into camp near the place we halted before.

Our rations were out and we could not get more until we reached Charlestown. Soon the boys were out in all directions killing hogs and sheep. All chicken roosts for two miles around were robbed of their occupants.

Thursday morning we were up at two A.M. The corps commenced moving at three. At the same time it commenced to rain and continued until three P.M.

We marched on the Winchester and Berryville pike. At Berryville we turned off the pike and took the road leading toward Harpers Ferry. We had a hard march. Most of the way was by the side of, not in, the road. The baggage train had the road.

The ground was very slippery and as the old saying has it we took one step forward and slipped two backward.

I am unable to give you any kind of a description of Berryville for we passed by the towns not through it. But it is like all other towns in this valley. For two miles or more around a town through which an army has passed not a single fence is standing. Further out there are fences.

On our march we have stripped corn fields. Our rations gave out on the 18th, so for miles in every direction men were out with their muskets and knives.

Soon in they came with pigs, sheep, geese and chickens. Perhaps you may think this rather rough on the farmers but men must have something to live on especially when they have been marched as we have on this return march.

It stopped raining in the afternoon and we reached a camping about two miles from the village of Charlestown.

We are now encamped in an orchard with a large spring of good water close at hand. There is any quantity of green corn and good ripe apples. There is a tree close by where we can get all we want. Everytime it is shaken some of the apples roll down into my tent. All I have to do is reach out and take them.

There is a large old fashioned house built of brick. No doubt it belongs to some one that is or has been well-to-do.

In a stack close by the barn the men found sixteen carbines and a number of revolvers. In the house were some papers not over loyal in contents. It appears to have been headquarters for guerrillas.

I have seen few, if any, able bodied men in the valley. They are all in the rebel army or leave when our army approaches. I think most of them are in the rebel army.

The women are the strongest secessionists I have seen in all my marching in Virginia.

As we advanced up the valley from the Ferry the wheat stacks grew less but piles of thrashed straw reminded one that the Rebs had turned farmers for a short time.

I have seen a good many threshing machines which looked as if they had been busy sometime of late.

About the 13th or 14th Jld Mosby with his cavalry captured some of our supply trains. How many wagons I don't know. But this much we do know, it made some differences in our rations.

On the 18th we halted at noon and were ordered to pitch our tents as we would stay all night. At the time we were about out of rations. Some of the men went out after sheep and corn.

One of them went to a house a mile and a half away. There in an out building he found a large quantity of forage also flour, sugar, tobacco and quite a large quantity of hospital stores. These were supplies captured by old Mosby.

There was no one at home but the negroes. They said that "Massa" got the stores from the government trains.

When the boys found these things they made a more thorough search. In a spring house they found cans of preserves of almost every kind besides milk and butter in large quantities. The boys had their fill.

Taking everything into consideration the valley is one of the strongest "secessh" places in all Virginia. I doubt if the vicinity of Richmond is stronger.

I received the \$2.00 you sent me which was a timely arrival for me. An order was read to the men telling them that three days rations must last four days. We finally had to make them last five days.

There are sutlers here but they don't even pretend to ask double what their merchandise is worth. But we are now independent of them.

You want to know about the men in the company re-enlisting and about me re-enlisting.

As for the men there are but 16 or 17 of the old 19th in the company. None of them will re-enlist myself included.

I don't like the idea of getting \$1100 that way. This being shot at for bounties I don't admire. If there are any at home who do I will not discourage them by telling them that as far as money goes they are paying dear for their whistle.

I have one more year to serve and when that time expires, I shall have given the best three years of my life in the country's service. If the war is not ended then, there will be time for me and thousands more to enlist for one, two, or three years as the case may be.

Some of the people at home grumble at paying heavy taxes. The soldier frequently pays a heavier tax, not for himself but for those at home who grumble. Sometimes he pays with his life, perhaps with an arm or perhaps he is made a cripple and made dependent on the government or charity.

I know it is very easy to get a few hundred dollars by signing a few papers but in the end it will cost all it is worth to him or his heirs.

You need not worry yourself about me re-enlisting before my three years are up.

(The sheet upon which the following was written bears no date. Events mentioned suggest that it is a part of #136 dated 19th 1864)

The cavalry under Gen. Torbert attacked and routed Longstreet's corps near Chester's Gap, so it is reported here. How true it is I don't pretend to know. We heard firing in the direction of Chester.

What we have accomplished in this trip up the valley I am at a loss to make out.

There is a rumor afloat here that Ewell and Longstreet's corps have joined forces and will be about seventy-five thousand strong in the valley. Perhaps they have that number but I think they will send some back to Richmond before the Potomac rises as they cannot cross without pontoons. They will, as usual, keep a small force here to make a show.

Some of the officers say that so long as there is a large rebel force in northern Virginia we will have to stay out. When they draw off we will go back to Washington.

Some of our officers who were away from the regiment when we left Washington reported to Maj. Gen. Auger so as not to be reported as deserters. He told them he could find some duty for them until the return of the regiment as it was but temporarily detached from the 22nd Corps and had been put in the 6th on account of the rebel invasion.

However, as the Dept. of Washington and the Middle Dept. have been put under command of Gen. Sheridan he will have something to say about it.

In all of my marching in Maryland and northern Virginia, I have not seen a single armed rebel nor do I care to unless he is in my power.

The day we came through Winchester I saw a rebel major. He was on parole and was rather saucy to some of the officers. Since then I have learned that he has been shot by our men. It was proved that in more than one instance he had assisted in the capture of our men and wagons. Such is the way the rebels keep their word.

Theodore Vaill and Goodwin Osborn were left behind when we started out. Theodore joined us today. Goodwin is at Sandy Hook, I believe. Theodore has been sick with jaundice. One can judge from the appearance of his eyes and skin.

He has been to Annapolis where he saw Wille Plumb but did not see Myron. Said he heard he was there.

Dwight Stone and Edward Hempstead, brother of Lieut. H. are the only ones of the original Happy Family now in the company.

I think that Dwight Stone and I have seen about as much of military life as any of those in the tent.

Since we left the forts I have not ridden on anything except transports. All the rest of my traveling has been on foot and a good share of it with a musket on my shoulder.

I have written a longer letter than I expected.

Mr. Williams is well. So are Seth, Ferris and Ed Pond. Jay Watrous is well. Corp. Cables is about as well as any of us.

Today we drew pork, onions, pickles and hardtack.

Our movements will depend on those of the enemy.
The boys all wish to be remembered to you.
I received the scissors and find them very useful.
Give my love to mother and all the family.
I remain you affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. Saw Capt. Shumway's younger brother. He is an orderly for Gen. Wilson.

Letter #138

Harpers Ferry, August 27, 1864

Dear Father,

Yours of the 19th and 20th reached me on the 24th. As I have a little leisure will write to you.

It seems that this vicinity is becoming one of the principal places of interest. It is now third in importance.

What the Rebs want of Harpers Ferry I don't know unless it is to make another invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

We have a line of breastworks reaching from the Shenandoah to the Potomac and in a very strong position too. One man behind earthworks is equal to three outside.

The 6th Corps has rested quietly ever since Monday, which is the longest rest we have had since 1st of July.

I suppose as a matter of course I shall have to give you indetail of our doings from Charlestown up until the present time.

I suppose you have seen accounts of the skirmish of Sunday morning in our front. Most of the heavy skirmishing was done by our division. As our regiment had just come off picket at Cedar Creek we were in reserve.

Sunday forenoon about 10 o'clock the picket line commenced a rapid fire all along our immediate front.

The long roll was beaten the bugle sounded the pack up. We were soon ready.

The skirmish line was strengthened and we were moved forward to a strong position on the right of the Charlestown and Martinsburg pike. Worked all day with our bayonets and board shovels. By night we had a strong work.

After dark the troops began falling back toward the Ferry.

Our division and brigade was the last to leave except the skirmishers and rear guard of cavalry.

We marched about as fast as our legs could carry us until we were three or four miles from Charlestown. The road was good and the moon shone. It was cool so we got along very well.

We reached our old camp after an absence of eleven days. We had not been there an hour before there was a heavy cavalry skirmish going on. Our cavalry retreated under batteries which opened upon the Rebs just as they came within range. This sent them back with our cavalry tight at their heels.

About noon we had to pack up and move to the left of the line and are now in camp about half way from the river to the pike.

We have not had any duty to do since we have been here. It is something we dare not think about. Did not suppose they could do much without us.

The 19th Corps are in front of us and the 8th Corps is on our left.

Everything is very quiet.

It seems the rebels are being reenforced. That is the intention of our generals. They wish to draw all the rebels they can away from Richmond so Gen. Grant can work to better advantage and prevent Lee from reenforcing Hood at Atlanta.

If we should have heavy rains and the rain raise the Potomac so that the Rebs could not ford it, they would leave for Richmond or else try and keep as many of our army here to protect the front.

I think some of us will move out of here before long. We are getting it so strongly fortified that it will take fewer men to defend it and leave more to work elsewhere.

There has been some skirmishing almost all of the time. Day before yesterday the Rebs charged our skirmish line but got the worst of it.

Yesterday two squadrons of our cavalry and a brigade of the 19th Corps attacked the Rebs in front of us. The plan was for the cavalry to go around to the rear of the Rebs and the infantry to charge their front.

So during the fore part of the day our men proposed stopping of picket firing to exchange papers etc. This was done and it threw the Johnnies off guard and gave the cavalry time.

Later in the day at a given time our men rushed over our works and charged taking them by surprise. The cavalry came up in their rear and as they fell back captured one Lieut. Col., three captains, four or five lieutenants and over seventy prisoners. How many we lost, either killed, wounded, or missing, I don't know.

Yesterday we drew two days' rations of hardtack, coffee, sugar, pork, two potatoes and four onions. Just think how large a breakfast I shall have tomorrow morning.

Ham costs 30¢ per pound.

There are plenty of sutlers but they do not trouble me nor I them.

It is impossible to get a pass to Harpers Ferry as we may move at any moment, therefore the sutlers monopolize prices and trade.

Potatoes one cannot buy nor onions. They do not fetch them here to sell. Their goods are mostly canned fruit and tobacco.

Peaches are coming into market. How they sell, I don't know.

Stationery is sold at enormous high prices. Envelopes are not to be found. If you will send one four or five quires and two bundles of envelopes by mail I should like it.

If possible I would like to have you make a portfolio something like the one Mrs. Barber gave me when we came out, that is, if you think it can be sent and not cost too much.

Charlie Hinsdale is here with the train. He came over to see us a few days ago. He is looking very well, was at City Point at the time of the mine explosion also the time of the explosion at City Point.

Our men are getting rested so we begin to feel a little more lively than for some time.

There is a story around here that the artillery regiments in the Potomac Army are going back into the defenses. Some think that as soon as we can be spared we will go back.

Charleston--

Monday, August 29th--

Here we are in the same position which we left Sunday night the 21st.

I have just finished my breakfast and what do you think I had? Well, it was fresh pork, coffee, hardtack. Did not have ham or potatoes. I have seen but few potatoes in the valley. It has been so dry. There is plenty of pork running around the valley.

It is reported that the rebels before us commenced retreating Friday night. Some think that Gen. Grant's capture of the Weldon R.R. has made Gen. Lee call back most of his force to Richmond to help retake what they have lost and if possible re-enforce Hood or have Hood re-enforce Lee at Richmond.

It seems as if one of the three most important Reb places must fall soon. When one goes one of the two must fall.

You write of not finding Newtown on the map. It is built largely on one street and very compact. It is four or five miles from Middletown on the road to Winchester.

I received a letter from Nellie Smith a few days ago saying aunt's health was very poor. I was hoping to hear that she was better.

What will Aunt Thankful do now that cousin Frances is no more. It does not seem possible that she is dead. Who thought that one so cheerful and full of life would be taken away so suddenly.

Please tell Phill that I would not object to the pleasure of hearing from him. I suppose that his time and mind are so much occupied that he puts off writing just as I do.

Since we have been in the valley it takes all my leisure time, when not too tired, to write letters and poor ones at that.

But I must think of closing. Give my best respects to all the friends and neighbors.

Hoping I shall hear from you all, I remain as ever,

Yours affectionately,

Lewis

Letter #139

Clifton Heights, three miles from
Berryville, Va., September 5, 1864

Dear Father,

Since I last wrote home we have made two more moves both up the valley, from Halltown to Charlestown and now we are ten miles or thereabouts from Charlestown at what is called Clifton Heights. Not much height as I can see.

We are in quite a strong position with a swamp in front of us and a ledge of rocks on our right on which are breastworks.

I presume that as usual you will expect an account in detail of what we have been doing. But before I commence I will have to stop and think when and where I last wrote. Well, as Col. Mackenzie would say, "It is no matter."

We left Halltown on Sunday morning August 28th and reached Charlestown in the afternoon--went into camp about 3 P.M.

I saw the 1st Conn Cavalry and also saw Maj. Gen. Sheridan. He was dressed in full uniform. Is a small man with black beard and hair and two of the blackest and sharpest eyes you ever saw in anyone's head. He rode a fiery black horse and had two or three orderlies with him. He rode through our camp yesterday.

After we had been there three days we went on picket. After being on picket two days we packed up and almost flew over the ground to our present position.

We marched ten miles in four hours halting but once for a five

minute rest. If you don't think that is traveling over the ground fast enough, just try it once, with a pack on your back.

We then halted and awaited orders.

The cavalry followed the rear guard of rebel cavalry and attacked them. The Rebs turned and our cavalry fell back followed by the Rebs. The 8th and 9th formed in line on each side of the pike. Our cavalry retreated down the pike followed by the Johnnies. All at once up rose both corps and closed in on them. After some sharp fighting they captured, so they tell us, 800 rebel cavalry. Our cavalry went back and captured a train of one hundred wagons.

This is not official. The papers will have the particulars.

Yesterday morning two regiments the 65th and 67th Pennsylvania went out with Gen. Russell to reconnoiter. They ran into a brigade of rebels about five miles west of here and came near being captured. They finally got away--six men missing from the 67th.

It is reported that the rebels have fortified themselves at Spouting Creek five miles from Berryville and that Early's headquarters are at Bunker Hill. They don't intend to leave the Valley and we don't intend to have them.

We got the news of the fall of Fort (name missing) early on Sunday morning also the capture of Atlanta. Of all the cheering you ever heard the 6th Corps beat it. It seemed as if they could not make enough noise.

The war in the south is progressing finely. I think if Jeff should gain his independence his territory for raising cotton will be quite small.

Friday two hundred of our regiments who had been left behind in Washington and at Camp Distribution joined the regiment. Some of them were wounded at Cold Harbor but most of them were worn out on our first march through Snickers Gap and back. Five came to our company. Two were new recruits. One enlisted for one year and the other for three.

Since we returned from our march up to Middletown we have had it quite easy and hope it will continue so the rest of the fall or until we return to Washington.

I see that you are afraid that I may be in love with the country here. Well, one thing you may be sure of. I will not so long as I remain in the army. When the war is over and I get out, then look out. I have not fallen in love with the people. There are no able bodied men left in the valley. If there are they leave when we approach.

There are meadows here which will yield as heavy a crop of grass as the best in Dutchess Co. N.Y. There are black walnuts in the woods. I have seen some splendid trees that are two and a half feet through and run up from thirty to fifty feet without a limb or a knot--straight as an arrow.

One night when I pitched my tent I made the pins and stakes of black walnut.

The finest oak I have ever seen I saw here. While passing a saw mill I saw some logs thirty feet long and over two and one half feet through at the tip. There are very few chestnuts. The rail fences are made of oak which we use for fire wood. I have seen no stone quarries equal to those up in Hardscrabble or Johnson's. There

are ledges--mostly slate and limestone. These are used for building material. They are easily quarried. In the Valley I have seen some very handsome houses built of them.

In Loudoun County a great many barns are built of stone and have cellars. The handsomest one I have seen was Gen. Wright's headquarters at Charlestown. To outward appearances, it beat anything of the kind I have seen.

It is all the same between Harpers Ferry and Winchester.

Most of our marching in the valley has been done across lots. Only at night have we marched in the roads.

Our wagons, ambulances, artillery and ammunition trains, all put upon the road would reach for miles. These have to be guarded. To do this they are given the road while the troops march through the fields a short distance from them.

You speak of a picnic in Mr. Well's grove. I can imagine how it all looked and how the tables appeared to the eager eyes and appetites of the small folks. I would like very much to hear them sing. It would sound much better to my ears than the bands here when they play, "The Star Spangled Banner, America and We'll Rally Round the Flag, Boys."

Our band plays them often.

I remember when we camp up to Washington as we passed the gun boats the band would play, "The Lincoln Gun Boats." The "Tars" would swarm into the rigging and decks and with caps in hand give cheer after cheer.

There are three or four bands in our division but they play military music only which we get tired of after a time.

If Mr. Richards was there it could not help being interesting. Besides there were Mr. Vaill, Lawrence, Sergt. Mason with Geo. M. Woodruff to bring up the rear.

Remember me to Mr. Hull and tell him if others do not appreciate his benevolence to the soldiers, I do.

I very well remember seeing Mrs. Geo. C. Woodruff in Col. Kellogg's tent. Also Mrs. Hotchkiss. She told me her name was once Bissell. She came from Sharon. Her husband was the manufacturer of the famous Hotchkiss shot now used in the army more than any other.

I think I saw Capt. Wells about the last of July, or the first of August, perhaps later. It was after our return from Middletown.

Today has been very quiet. There has been some skirmishing in our front. We have thrown up breastworks and settled down for a short time.

The 19th Corps is encamped a mile and a half from here. Quite a number of the 13th Conn. have been here to see the boys with whom they are acquainted.

I see by the papers that the Chicago convention has nominated the Giant Little Mac and has hung a dead weight on him. Perhaps Pendleton will help them out but Vallendigham will help build it up and in the end hurt more than help.

There are a good many soldiers who would vote for McClellan but they cannot go Vallendigham for support.

A good many want the war brought to an end, peace declared, the rebels to have all the territory they once possessed with

the Mississippi River in the bargain. All of this after we have taken from them more than half their territory and almost all of their sea ports and after sacrificing so many thousands of lives and millions of money. With this goes the nation's honor and free government.

Those at home who want peace on any terms are just as bad as the rebels whose guns I can hear. I would just as soon turn a cold shoulder toward them as toward the rebels now in the army.

The boys are all well as usual. Hiram Spencer has been with the company all of the time. Has stood all of the hard marches very well, as well as most of us. He was promoted from corporal to sergeant a week ago by Capt. Shumway, but perhaps this is telling you no news. Your son Lewis was taken by surprise when he found himself promoted to a corporal in Spencer's place.

With the end of this sheet, I must end my letter.

Tell Phill that as the evenings begin to lengthen I should like to hear from him. If he does not write get a bayonet, or if one cannot be found, take the largest pitchfork to him.

We have had no mail for two or three days. When we get one I shall expect letters from home.

Give my love to all. Write soon, now that the evenings are lengthening.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #140

Clifton Heights, Va., Sept. 12, 1864

Dear Father,

As I do not have much of anything to occupy my time I will commence a letter to you and finish it as opportunity permits.

I received your letters of 2nd, 4th and 5th of Sept. on the 10th inst. We get our mail when the supply train comes up from Harpers Ferry which is about once in three days.

I think none of your letters have been lost. Guess I have received all of them if I have not answered them.

A short time since I received a letter from Uncle Frederick also one from Mary Ferris.

We are still in the same place from which I wrote you last. There has been little moving of troops. The 19th Corps is on our right, the 8th on our left and a division of cavalry on the right and left of them.

Of late the rebels have been very quiet in this vicinity--have not seen or heard anything of them. They are reported to be some seven or eight miles from here--fortified.

Some think they are moving away the largest part of their force to Lynchburg and Richmond because of the fall of Atlanta and our victory in Mobile Harbor.

I see by the papers that some do not think much of Gen. Sheridan as a commander of an infantry force--are not satisfied because we do not fight the rebels in the Valley and drive them out of it to Richmond. They would do us much more hurt there than here.

Old Mosby is prowling around the country looking for what he may devour. He is very anxious to get possession of our trains as our cavalry is of the rebels.

It is reported that Ewell has a large train of empty wagons with him. Perhaps he is meditating another invasion. If so he and his army can't be going to Richmond and be here at the same time.

I think the rebels are in a rather tight place here in Virginia as well as further south.

Saturday night we had a very heavy thunder shower. The rain did not stop to run off the little shelter tents but ran right through them. It seemed as if solid water was coming down. Yesterday afternoon it rained again and hailed too.

Today is very much like November instead of September and this in the "sunny south."

There is no sign of any movement at present except watch the movements of the rebels.

We have now become "one year men" having been in service two years the 11th of this month. Looking back over the time we have been in service and the time we have yet to serve, we as a regiment, have been very fortunate--very much favored. However, we may see enough service in the remaining year to make up but I hope not.

Three more recruits came to the regiment yesterday. One came as a substitute and got \$1300--is very small and young. The fault with many of them is they are either too old or too young to be of much service to the government.

Quite a number of regiments are going home this fall as their term of service will expire then.

I think our chance of going back to Washington will improve as the recruits begin to fill up the army. The regiment is very anxious to get back more so than the colonel. He says he would much rather be in the field than in the forts.

I will try again to finish my letter as we may have a mail today. As I have my state check to send will take advantage of the opportunity.

There is nothing new to write about. We are well as usual with the exception of a few colds brought on by stormy weather.

The mail will close in just one hour and therefore I must be brief.

If you find it practical to send paper and envelopes with a portfolio please (if you have not already sent it) put in a lead pencil or two for future use.

I don't know how long we shall have to wait for our pay. Four months are now due us amounting to \$64.00. My next pay will be at the rate of \$18 per month.

When next you write if you happen to have a stray V green about the house and can let it depart for me I shall much appreciate it.

I must close.

Tell the little girls that we have just begun to draw three days' rations and I must have mine so have not time to answer theirs in this but will try the next time I write.

Enclosed you will find my seventh state check.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Please send me a pair of stockings. We draw clothing but there are no socks to be had and I am very much in want of some. Also some black thread.

Cedar Creek, Sept. 21, 1864

Dear Father,

I presume that by this time you have heard of another battle in the Valley and of course are anxious about the 2nd C.H.A. and especially about me.

Well, I am perfectly safe, did not get so much as a scratch although men were wounded and killed on every side of me.

Our regiment lost heavily in wounded especially officers. A large number of them were wounded.

Lieutenants Candee and Hubbard of Co. H were killed.

In Co. A., so far as I can learn we have one killed and one died of wounds the next morning. The name of the man killed was Joseph Gardner. The man who died of wounds was Horatio Bennett. He was about twenty-one years of age and was in my tent at Fort Worth.

The wounded, so far as I can learn are Corporals Cables and Bunnell, Fred Jennings, Edward Aikens, Watson Cogswell, Capt. Shumway, Lieut. Marsh. These are all the casualties we know of at present. There are some missing. We don't know whether they were killed or wounded.

Maj. Rice was killed. Lieut. Kilbourn was wounded in both hands.

We have but one officer left, that is, Lieut. Tuttle. The others are wounded. Maj. Skinner was wounded in the breast. Eleven officers are wounded, three of them captains.

I am told that Lieut. Cogswell has had a leg amputated. Lieut. Cable will not live.

Corp. Cables is dangerously wounded, from what I am able to learn. It is doubtful that he will pull through, still there is some chance for his life. He was wounded in the right side. The ball went in just below the breast bone and came out between two of his ribs. The distance from where the ball went in to where it came out is about six inches.

Dwight Stone saw him at the division hospital. The steward told him that if he had been wounded two inches lower it would have been mortal.

I will get Dwight Stone to write to his people as he can give them the particulars much better than I.

Fred Jennings was wounded in the wrist. The ball went in between two of his fingers on the left hand and came out in the wrist. He may lose his hand.

Capt. Shumway was the first man in the regiment wounded.

Corp. Cables was the second. Lieut. was the first killed.

Frank Bunnell was wounded in the thigh--how bad I don't know.

I shall give you a description of what I saw of the battle from the commencement of the day until the rout which happened just before sundown.

The corps was up and breakfasted by four o'clock and ready to move. Our brigade moved out of camp about daylight. We reached the creek about half past eight, crossed it and went toward Winchester for a mile or more.

All of the time we could hear firing and now and then a shell would fly over our heads. Soon one struck a man in Co. G. taking off his foot half way to the knee.

We filed up into a ravine and halted for an hour or two.

Some of the boys found a potato patch. I went and filled my pockets. I got back just in time to fall in with the rest of the regiment.

We marched up toward where the hottest shelling and the heaviest fighting was going on. It must have been between ten and eleven o'clock.

We were soon in line. Our men seemed to be falling back. We were ordered to open. This had the effect of driving them back.

We now advanced and opened once more and kept up a running fire. After advancing we filed into a small ravine and lay down.

We laid here until one or two o'clock perhaps later. Time passed very slow. We wished that the sun would drop very fast.

The terrible tug and struggle for victory was soon to come.

We were ordered to advance and keep firing as we advanced. Soon the Rebs were seen running for dear life--that is, those who did not fall.

We halted in a strip of woods reformed and advanced. Now we were destined to suffer heavier than earlier in the day as we were now opposite the only stronghold they had.

They had heavy breastworks that had been there ever since Gen. Shields had driven the Rebs out of Winchester.

We charged across an open field. They opened on us with terrible accuracy. Shells exploded over our battle line. Four struck and exploded so close to me that I was covered with dirt. One struck our line while the men were lying down--exploded blowing men to atoms and throwing bodies everywhere. One struck twenty yards in front of me--exploded and killed men on both sides of me but I was not hurt.

We advanced once more. I got down into a dry water course. Just then the Rebs opened with cannister. Almost all of this went over us.

About this time Gen. Upton was wounded in the thigh by a cannister shot. Maj. Rice was struck in the bowels as he was at the general's side. Those who saw his body say it was torn and mangled very badly. His bowels were scattered all around--one arm was torn off. Those who saw it say it was the worst looking body on the field.

We had to fall back to our left under cover of rising ground.

About this time our batteries having received a fresh supply of ammunition came into position and opened. This drew away the rebs' attention so we could fire with fewer minies humming past us.

A brigade of cavalry got in the rebels rear on the right of their batteries and took a brigade of prisoners.

Our men were now advanced into the gap thus made and flanked the batteries.

We could see the rebel officers galloping back and forth.

The Rebs did not have time even to get their guns and horses off. When we arrived there they stood just as they left them. Dead men and dead horses lay in confusion with broken sabres and muskets.

Our cavalry and reserve artillery now came up and followed the fleeing Rebs very closely until after dark.

We marched to the east side of Winchester close by the graveyard. Once it had been very nice. We pulled down the fence for wood to cook coffee.

We lay down about ten o'clock after fighting all day. I was so worn out and tired I could sleep but little.

We had to be up and cook breakfast before the moon had stopped shining. I made my breakfast of coffee and potatoes. About sunrise we started on the march toward Strasburg so fast.

We crossed Cedar Creek about two o'clock on a good strong bridge the Rebs had built and had not time to destroy on their retreat.

We are now in very nearly the same place as when here before. We went into camp last night and are still here--it being about noon.

There is a story around camp that our cavalry has taken 1100 more prisoners and four battle flags.

I must stop for the present. I may have a chance to add more. If not, remember me to all the friends and family.

Thanking the Almighty for allowing me to live through another battle.

I am your most affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #142

September 27, 1864

Dear Father,

We are now at Harrisonburg, Va. We reached here the afternoon of the 25th. Have been lying in camp now for two days resting after a week of the hardest kind of marching and some heavy fighting. I have not been very well for a week past.

On the 24th we marched some ten or twelve miles beyond Mount Jackson.

The infantry, cavalry and artillery followed the Rebs and fired on their rear worrying them. Their wagon train got partly in the rear. We tried hard to capture it but did not.

I was not well enough to be in the battle at Strasburg and did not overtake the regiment until the next day at Woodstock. They marched in the night after driving the rebels from their works.

We lost none killed--James Osborne was wounded in the side--not dangerously. He went to the rear.

Our other wounded, I know nothing about other than what I have previously written.

They are in the hospital at Winchester.

I have but a few moments in which to finish.

Most of the boys in the company are well. Myron is well. Ed. Pond was left at division hospital at Strasburg--sick with dysentery.

I expect to feel stronger and better soon.

I hear no mail will come today.

Curtis Wedge has just come to the company having marched from Harpers Ferry here.

Give my love to all the friends and family,
From your affectionate son,

Lewis

Letter #143

Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 3, 1864

Dear Brother Phill:

Since I received your long looked for and very interesting letter, we have passed through two more battles and are some seventy miles from here where we broke camp on September 19th at Clifton

Heights, Va.

I have written home what I saw and experienced at the Winchester battle so will not recapitulate.

We followed the rebels up to Fisher's Hill where they might have held out if they had had the pluck of our men.

Sheridan flanked them with the 8th Corps as you have already learned. When they began to leave their works our men charged all along the line.

They left in a very great hurry and traveled all night. We followed them up to Woodstock where we drew four days' rations and then marched to Newmarket.

I was about worn out after pushing and marching at such a rapid rate. The next morning I got a pass to the ambulance train. Got in and rode all day. This is the first time since we came out that I have ridden in an ambulance. All the rest of my marching has been done on foot.

Our men crowded the Rebs very close all day. Both parties marched very fast. Our artillery would run their batteries beyond our skirmish line and fire upon the retreating Johnnies. Our men could see their wagon trains plainly. If we had our cavalry with us we would have attempted to capture them but they were off somewhere else.

Our men followed them up until after dark and skirmished with them part of the evening.

Our boys were about tired out.

I joined the regiment that night.

We were up the next morning before the stars had stopped shining and cooked our soldier's breakfast. Before sunrise we were on the move.

The day was very pleasant. We marched leisurely resting every hour.

We reached this place about four o'clock, went into camp, got our straps partly off when we had to put them on again. We marched down to the village to do patrol duty but found another regiment had got the start of us. So after marching almost all day we had to turn around and go back again but finally went into camp for the night.

We remained here all of the next day when we (the 6th and 19th Corps) were ordered up the Valley.

I got an ambulance pass and rode all of the march. We halted and went into camp. I remained in the hospital tent overnight and joined the regiment the next morning.

About eight o'clock we were ordered to pack up and back we went over the same way we came, reaching our old camp just before sundown.

Here we are still.

How soon and in what direction we are to move no one but Gen. Sheridan knows. His headquarters are on a hill a short distance from us.

A small foraging party of cavalry and infantry went out a few days ago toward the Luray valley. What success they had I have not heard.

The weather has been quite mild. Have had but two rainy days since we halted here.

A few days ago a son of Q.M. Gen. Meigs, a lieutenant on Gen.

Sheridan's staff, with two orderlies was outside of our picket line and was attacked by a party of guerrillas. Their throats were cut from ear to ear after they had offered to surrender.

In retaliation Gen. Sheridan ordered all forage to be taken and the valley laid in ashes. Yesterday we could see any number of buildings burning.

Today everything seems to be very quiet.

The cavalry are away on expeditions almost all of the time.

The rebels are reported to be very strongly entrenched at Staunton.

As it is getting to be rather late and we have to transport in wagons our supplies from Harpers Ferry, a distance of almost one hundred miles, I doubt very much if we go any farther up the valley.

Some think we will move towards Gordonsville and use the railroad to transport our supplies from Alexandria. But it is all guess work.

We have seen no paper later than Sept. 27th.

Perhaps Gen. Grant has been doing wonders around Richmond. I hope he has.

I hope to feel better soon. What I need is rest. If I can have that think I shall be all right in a few days.

All but a few in the company are well.

There are small squads of rebels prowling around the country picking up our men if they happen to be outside the picket lines.

Myron is getting along very well. Curtis Wedge is with the company. He joined us a few days ago.

I suppose that if we were nearer Harpers Ferry the army would get a much larger number of recruits but being away up here they don't send them.

We have none of our officers with us. The captain and two lieutenants are wounded and Lieut. Tuttle is sick. The company is under command of Lieut. Munger.

Lieut. Col. Hubbard has gone home on a twenty days furlough-- lucky man he.

We have heard of our wounded men at Winchester. Corp. Cables is getting on very well--so are almost all of the men. It is feared that Capt. Berry of Co. H. will not live. I have not heard about Lieut. Kilbourne. Was told he was shot in both hands. Lieut. Cogswell lost a leg but is getting on well.

Strasburg, October 8--

Perhaps I'll finish this letter here and perhaps not. There is no knowing where or when we may stay overnight.

We left Harrisonburg the morning of the 6th and marched to the village of Mount Jackson a distance of over twenty miles. It was long tiresome march and at night I had to go on picket.

Started the next morning and marched to Woodstock a distance of fifteen miles passing through Edinburg. From Edinburg to Woodstock is seven miles and we did it without halting once until we encamped for the night.

At seven this morning we started and reached here about one P.M. Have gone into camp perhaps for the night.

As we are out of rations we expect to draw here. We have lived on half rations for the past few days.

I have not received my letter from Aunt Julia in a very long

time. Should be glad to hear from her.

I saw a Litchfield Enquirer and in it the death of cousin Mary Ferris. I think it was the 18th of Sept. I have had many pleasant and interesting letters from her. It does not seem possible that she is dead. It is but a short time since she was well and healthy.

The day is very chilly more like Nov. than Oct.

Myron sends his best respects. Says he is getting on very well. I am feeling much better today than for a week past.

Tell father the \$5.00 came all right. I hardly know what I should have done without it. I have used it pretty freely as I could not eat army rations.

I don't know what they intend to do with the army. Some think we may see Richmond before winter sets in but I hope we will winter in Washington.

Letter #144

Cedar Creek, Va., Oct. 14, 1864

Dear Father,

I have a letter from you dated Oct. 2 and 7. At the time we were at Millwood opposite Chester Gap in the Blue Ridge. We had our supply train with us.

We arrived at Strasburg on Saturday, the 8th.

On Monday the 6th Corps packed up and started for Front Royal twelve miles distant.

We marched as fast as our legs could carry us and went into camp on the Berryville pike about two miles north of the town. Here we remained until the 13th when we started for Chester Gap.

We did not start until 8 A.M. but reached the little village of Millwood opposite Chester Gap a distance of about ten miles, if I am correctly informed, and went into camp for the night.

About half past two in the morning of the 14th we were turned out of bed and ordered to pack up as soon as possible.

In a few minutes we were packed and ready to march.

We started back toward Newtown and passed through it about 9 A.M. Here we halted for an hour to cook coffee, then started for Middletown. We went into camp on Cedar Creek two miles from the town.

At Millwood it was reported that we were to go through Chester Gap and march to Washington, our supply train to report to Alexandria.

However, when we reached Millwood Gen. Sheridan ordered us to return to Middletown as the rebels had attacked our picket line on Fishers Hill and driven them in.

As Fishers Hill is of no importance to us we fell back to the north side of Cedar Creek.

The north bank of the creek is very high and bluffy. Here our army can hold at bay as large a force as the enemy can at Fishers Hill without being flanked easily.

Some of the time the nights have been chilly and cool during the day.

We hear good news from Gen. Grant.

Gen. Price it seems is again invading Missouri but I hope his army will be driven back and scattered.

Since Sept. 19th we have marched about two hundred miles in our goings and comings in the valley and in our march to Millwood, besides fighting two battles on the way.

October 20th--

Before this reaches you you will have the news of our having had a hard fought battle here; of our army being surprised and driven back in confusion and that finally our retreating columns were about faced, formed in line of battle and drove the enemy over the same ground they had driven us from in the morning, drove them over the creek and that we encamped on the same ground as before the surprise.

Now you will want to know how many of our company were killed and wounded. There were none killed and only four wounded.

They were Corp. Wilcox, Joseph Moody, Sergt. Wm. Smith and Thomas Morris. They are strangers to you.

Our company went on picket the 18th. The first day and night passed without any disturbance. It was very quiet.

The next night about 4 A.M. very rapid firing commenced on our right. There was some sort of cheering and charging.

Soon we found out that the rebels had crossed the creek, gone around the right and to the rear of the picket line.

I am well as usual.

Will you send me by mail a pair of gloves, very light. I don't want heavy woolen ones but something that will not take up much room.

We are ordered to pack up and be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Myron is well.

Yours truly in a hurry,
Lewis

P.S. I received the \$5.00

Letter #145

Cedar Creek, Oct. 21, 1864

Dear Father,

I have a few spare minutes in which to write you a few lines to let you know how and where we are.

Before this you have heard of the battle and are anxious to hear from me.

Our company with company E, B, and L were on picket at the time so we escaped the bloodiest part of it. Co. L was on picket at a ford a half mile from us and were all made prisoners at least we have seen none of them since.

We fell back and joined the brigade above Middletown. Found them on the retreat and heard of the death of Capt. Hosford and that Capt. Fenn had lost his right arm.

Col. Mackenzie had two horses shot under him and was wounded in both heels. Adjutant Vaill had a ball hit his sword just below his hand and bent the blade double.

Just after we joined the brigade which was at ten or eleven o'clock Gen. Sheridan arrived on the ground.

The retreating columns were about faced and formed in lines of battle in a strip of woods. There were two lines of battle. We were in the front.

After Sheridan had formed his lines he rode in front of them and the men cheered him.

About half past two the Rebs drove in the skirmish line on our right. Our men opened on the Rebs with a terrible fire. It mowed them down like a grass before a machine.

At about three the order for a charge came. We moved out and started across an open field.

The enemy was behind a stone wall and rail fence. We had hard work in driving them from it but finally they broke and ran. We followed them.

Many a brave man fell in the first charge. Most of them were hit above the waist.

The Rebs fell back behind a stone wall and woods.

We crept up behind their position and after a half hour's hard fighting they began to "skedaddle."

It soon became a complete rout. They fired a few shots.

Our division suffered very much from their artillery fire. We had only one gun on our right and some batteries on the pike.

The rebels abandoned everything. They all pitched for the bridge. Here the confusion was great. In the hurry to cross the bridge, baggage wagons, cannon and ambulances ran off into the creek and landed on its rocky bed fifty or sixty feet below. Mules, horses and wounded men all in one mass.

The road was filled with dead horses broken down wagons and guns.

Immediately after the last rout Gen. Torbett with the cavalry moved around their right on the full jump. He reached the Rebs entrenchments at Fisher's Hill. Here he dismounted a part of his cavalry and put them behind the works.

When the Rebs came up almost out of breath he bade them good evening. The Rebs fled to the right and left. Here he took a great many prisoners, etc.

After we joined the brigade and in the charge we did not lose any from our company killed. I will give you the names of those who were wounded.

They were Sergt. Wm. Smith, Corp. J.L. Wilcox, Thom's Morris, and Joseph Moody.

I had some very narrow escapes. Shells burst over my head, some not fifty feet from me. Fragments of shells fell within a few inches of me. Bullets went so close to my face, that I could almost feel them brush me.

We fired until our muskets were so hot we could hardly hold them in our hands.

Frank Parker is all right and will be fine and healthy. All of the L--d boys are well.

I received by mail your letter P.O. marked Oct. 15th. If I had time I would try and answer your questions.

I picked up a portfolio on the field.

Will you send me some paper, a pair of stockings and a pair of gloves. Let them be of something light and fine and not take up much room. Also send some thread. (You read of our mails being captured. The army's headquarters mails were captured but not ours).

Do not fail to send them. They will come I think. I will risk it.

We have taken a large number of prisoners. There are over fifty cannon not a mile from here which were taken from the Rebs.

Gen. Custer rode by here today with quite a number of rebel flags. They have a blue field with two white stripes running from corner to corner and stars of red.

I must close. Give my love to all the family, etc.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. I don't know that you can read this. I have written in such a hurry.

Letter #146

Cedar Creek, Va., Oct. 23, 1864

What I saw of the fight of Oct. 19, 1864 at Cedar Creek, Virginia

The night Oct. 18 was very pleasant and quiet.

My company (A) was on picket at the time some two miles from the camp on or near Cedar Creek. The early part of the night passed off very quietly.

About daylight we were startled by a volley of musketry and a yell like that of fiends.

Soon we learned that the Rebs had gotten between the pickets and the 2nd Division of the 6th Army Corps and the cavalry.

They charged upon the reserves who hardly had time to take their muskets from the stacks and fire a volley before the Rebs were upon them. Our men broke and fell back.

In less in twenty minutes from the first attack, heavy and sharp musketry firing opened on the extreme left occupied by the 8th Corps.

We prepared ourselves for a fight, then listened to the firing which was coming nearer and nearer until it seemed but half as far away as at first.

Soon the order came for us to deploy and fall back quickly-- which we did. After marching some two miles we halted and then moved toward the front.

We had not gone far before we met our division retreating. Everybody was going to the rear so we turned around and followed their example.

Very soon we about faced and marched back toward the advancing rebels.

Soon we met Maj. Gen. Sheridan who told the men there was work for them to do, that the enemy was pretty well scattered, that if they remained that way long he would whip Hell out of them before night and that the boys should encamp in their old positions.

We formed in line of battle. Our brigade in the front line. Our line of battle was formed in the woods with our skirmishers just in the edge of the woods.

A short time before the charge Gen. Sheridan rode along the line and the men cheered him as he passed.

In about half an hour an order came to advance. We marched to the edge of the woods, halted and straightened our lines.

Now was to come the bloody conflict which would tell who were brave and who were cowards.

We advanced across an open field firing as we went. The Rebs were strongly posted and to good advantage, behind a stone wall and a rail fence, thrown down and piled up for breastworks.

Finally, we got them started. They fell back about seven hundred yards to a road. We advanced to their old position and kept up a heavy fire.

About this time our cavalry began to operate on their right flank and in their rear.

During the fight the enemy used their artillery on us to very good advantage. More than half our killed and wounded were struck by shells. They struck and burst in front in the rear and among us. They plowed up the ground, covering us with dust and dirt.

Soon we had them under way. They threw a few more shells at us killing and wounding quite a number but this lasted but a few minutes.

As we advanced over a small hill we could see the last of them traveling for the river in a great hurry. Our cavalry was following tight to their heels.

Gen. Torbetts and Gen. Merritt divisions of cavalry had by taking a circuitous route reached the works of the Rebs at Fishers Hill and as they came up opened upon them. They broke to the right and left leaving their plunder, artillery, baggage, and ambulances behind them. Also almost all of our men who had been taken prisoners in the morning.

As we advanced over the field we found all of our men who were killed in the morning stripped of pants and shirts. I saw one body which was entirely naked. It was that of an officer who had on a good uniform.

Some of the wounded had their pockets searched and every cent of money taken. It was a hard and sad sight.

The field was covered with broken muskets, straps and now and then a dismounted cannon or its carriage, dead horses and articles too numerous to mention.

We went back to our old camp for the night just as Gen. Sheridan said we should. Our men came in during the evening. We cooked our supper, spread our blankets on beds of straw and soon the whole corps was wrapped in the arms of sleep where twelve hours before had begun one of the bloodiest battles this army has seen.

When we joined the brigade we learned of the death of Capt. Hosford and of Capt. Fenn being wounded in the arm.

I saw quite a number of our regiment who were wounded, saw some of our men carrying Sergt. Parks, on a stretcher, to the rear. We were soon joined by the remainder of the regiment and the colors.

It was reported that Maj. Gen. Wright was wounded early in the fight and that Brig. Gen. Ricketts was mortally wounded.

The morning after the battle the 1st brigade was under the command of a captain who but six weeks before was a sergeant.

The 2nd Brigade was under the command of a lieutenant colonel. Capt. Jones was in command of our regiment with not over three hundred men in the regiment and only six men in Co. M. The remainder of the company and Lieut. Skinner were taken prisoners. Lieut. Quirkum was wounded and taken prisoner along with some twelve men.

Col. Mackenzie was wounded in the foot in the early part of the day and in the charge was hit in the shoulder.

Four of our company were wounded--none very dangerously.

The victory over the Rebs was a complete rout.

All honor is due Gen. Sheridan.

Letter #147

Camp at Cedar Creek, Va. Oct. 30, 1864

Dear Father,

As it is now about 4 P.M. and I have a few leisure moments at my disposal will commence a letter to you.

The weather today has been very still and pleasant. We had some chilly days last week that were not so pleasant.

My health is much better than it was before the battle.

Divine service was held in the 65th N.Y. by their chaplain. He has been in the army since the commencement of the war. I was unable to be present being detained to assist in making out the rolls of our company preparatory to being mustered for two months' pay tomorrow.

Our company went out on picket this morning so there are but few of us in camp. The pickets are out two or more miles from camp with cavalry in front of them. Everything is very quiet.

All of the cannon and other trophies captured from the Rebs has been sent away. I tell you it was a sight worth going not a few miles to see.

The captured cannon were drawn up in line, the muzzles all pointing one way, then the caissons, then a pile of Confederate State harnesses (about worn out) that would fill eight or ten government wagons. Next stood their baggage wagons which were of all kinds and shapes from U.S. wagons, changed to Confederate, down to old farm wagons of the last century. There was their Hospital Dept. This was captured complete. The medical stores were few and of poor quality. The ambulances were made of spring wagons fitted with new bodies and tops. Some had mattresses but almost all were destitute. The poor victim of shot and shell had to make the best of the soft side of the unfurnished bottom. Of muskets there were six or eight cords.

But I must stop for supper.

Evening--

Once more I am armed with a pen, for ammunition ink, for projectiles dull thoughts, so don't have your expectations too high like Early and his men.

But to commence where I left off.

Passing from the ambulances, I next took a look at the horses and mules. Perhaps if Phill had been here he would have had an eye out for a good span but I did not.

The horses did not look much like what we have in our army. Most of them were unable to draw the guns and wagons up the hill from the creek. Our men had to take extra horses to help them up. Most of them were raw boned specimens and many were so poor they could almost slip through the harnesses. All looked as if a brush and curry comb were unknown to them.

The mules were very small and appeared a little more mulish than their masters.

Now what next?

Well, the prisoners--I saw seventeen hundred in one crowd from a lieutenant colonel down to a private.

Let Richmond papers make the most of their thirteen hundred reported as prisoners. We took the flower of their army. One of their officers said that their old men and cripples were left to do duty in and around Richmond.

All of the Rebs I have seen in the Valley are smart healthy looking men.

Their uniforms are light gray. The coat comes to the waist. They wear slouch hats. Caps are seldom worn. What few are seen are U.S.

They are very quick, walk like horses. Our men do not pretend to keep up with them. They all seem very cheerful and talkative, were laughing and joking all of the time. Some said that they should "lay off this winter" and not tramp over Virginia's soil.

Quite a large number said Jeff would not have the benefit of their services as they should take the oath of allegiance. All from officers down to privates said they were tired of the war and that peace was worth more than the C.S.A.

Monday 31st--

Have just been mustered for two months' pay now due us.

The 19th Corps have had orders to make their quarters as comfortable as possible. The 6th Corps have had no such orders so think there is some prospect of our moving from here.

There are no rebels in the Valley, so the cavalry report. Guerrillas are prowling around where there are any of our trains in hopes of making up Early's losses.

I shall clip from the Baltimore Commercial Advertiser some extracts from the Richmond papers. These show how well they felt and how they make things appear in the Valley. From them you can compare their story with ours and make you own conclusions.

As for the cavalry that flanked them it was Gen. Custer's and Merrett's. They used them up in the rapid retreat and captured their artillery and baggage train.

You will see how well they tell the story to their people.

Our infantry had a good deal to do with their defeat for we charged with two lines of battle and in some places three.

The Richmond papers say Sheridan was not on the ground and did not have anything to do with their defeat. I saw him twice--once when the lines of battle were being formed and once when he rode along the lines--the men cheering him.

The Rebs could hear it--soon after this they charged our right and were met with the hottest fire I have ever seen. They fell back to their old position not liking their reception.

Perhaps you will think that I think of nothing but the war and victory. Not so. Let anyone have gone over the ground the next morning and he would never have wanted to see or hear of another battle field and again witness the horrors and suffering to be found there.

But I'll drop the battle and try and answer some of your questions.

Luther Pratt fell out sick, last May, on the march from Fredericksburg. He has been, or is, home on a furlough. The soldier you

mention who was buried last week did not belong to my company. He might have belonged to some company in the regiment.

There are about three hundred and fifty in the regiment for duty out of seventeen hundred who left Alexandria last May. You will wonder how we can be reduced so much. Some are detailed but most of them are sick or wounded and in hospitals. About forty are on their way to Libby--poor men.

The health of the company is very good. The greatest trouble is diarrhea caused by not having vegetables. Our rations consist of sugar, coffee, hardtack and bacon.

There are but nine line officers present--one lieutenant colonel and two majors. Some companies have neither commissioned or non-commissioned officers present for duty.

Lieut. Col. Hubbard has returned from his leave of absence; all of the boys were glad to see him.

There have been some promotions in Co. A. Eben Oakes and Mr. Williams have been promoted to corporals.

Myron is doing well. Thinks his health better than when in the hospital last summer.

Where we will winter I am unable to tell or even guess but think our chances of staying in the field are much better than staying in the fort.

All of the boys from Litchfield are well with the exception of Curtis Wedge who is complaining a little.

If convenient wish you would send me the New York Observer. We get papers when the ration train comes up from Martinsburg. They cost us 10¢ and are three or four days old at that.

With much love,
Yours truly,
Lewis Bissell

Nov. 2nd--

By today's mail (the first we have had in four days) we learn that Corporals Frank Bunnell and Wilcox are dead. The former was wounded at Winchester and the latter at Cedar Creek. They died at a hospital in Philadelphia.

Letter #148

Camp three miles south of Winchester
Nov. 9, 1864

Dear Father,

I received yours and Phill's letters the 5th inst.

They found me well as usual and at Cedar Creek.

Yesterday we struck tents and moved back toward Winchester. We are in camp between Newtown and Winchester. Our regiment lies close to the pike.

For the past few days it has been rather stormy and yesterday it was quite slippery especially after a thousand had marched over the ground ahead of one.

There is not much news to write this time nor much time in which to write it. So you must not find much fault if this should happen to be shorter than usual.

There has not been any heavy force of rebels near here for some time. A few rebel cavalymen have been hovering around but they keep a safe distance from our cavalry.

Yesterday we saw the 1st Conn. Cavalry. They told us Lyman Adams and young Shumway were taken prisoners on the 19th of Oct. How true this is I do not know.

What is to be done with this army this winter remains to be seen. I do not think it will be kept here but rather one corps sent to Grant and the other put on the Potomac to keep the Rebs out of Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Our supply train has just come up and we are to draw rations also will get mail--whether I do, remains to be seen.

I am destitute for news to write about.

I saw Charles Hinsdale a few days ago. He was looking as well as usual. Most of his time is spent at Martinsburg where he is forage master for the supply trains. His business is to deal with feed to the teamsters.

Curtis Wedge has not been very well for some time past but is with the company.

I think we will fall back to Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry in a few days.

The mail has come in. One letter for me. Who do you think it was from? Well, Mrs. Hitchcock. I suppose you have no objections of my receiving a letter from a Mrs.

I have been looking for a small bundle from home but none has arrived.

Below I shall give you a list of the old originals of Co.A.

Sergt. Henry Williams, Geo. D. Stone, Ferris Pond, Chas. Hinsdale, Harry Scoville, Russell Curtis, Curtis Wedge, Lewis Bissell, Geo. Hannahs, Silas Griswold, Edward Hempstead, Edward Hull, Seth Pond, Hiram Spencer, Willard Watrous and Myron Kilbourn.

Goodbye,

(Not signed)

Letter #149

Camp, Nov. 16, 1864

Dear Brother,

I presume before this time you have been looking for a letter from me but nary a one has come.

We are very quietly settled in camp on the Winchester pike. Our regiment is on the left of the corps which runs to the west about two miles. On our right is the 19th Corps with the 12th and 13th Conn. Vols.

We have been very busy of late throwing up heavy earth works--which looks as if we are to stay here and not be driven out by the rebels no matter how early they may come.

Some of the troops have had orders to put up comfortable winter quarters. We have had not such orders so think there is some move in prospect for us. But as the old judge says "Cases of a doubtful nature are very uncertain." So it is with the 2nd C.V.A. Yes with anyone who happens to be in the 6th Corps.

We have heard of the election of Uncle Abe and Andy for the next four years. Some of the copper-heads say, "Now for four years of war."

Well, if we have it, I'll have but nine months and if alive will come home and let someone else come out and fight.

Friday there was some skirmishing in front of us. There was a

rumor that the rebels had crossed Cedar Creek in strong force. We held ourselves in readiness for a fight. At night the firing died away but commenced again the next morning.

In the afternoon Gen. Phill, as the men call him, went down the pike with two divisions of cavalry. That night we went to bed and in the morning there was no firing on the picket line. The Rebs were miles away.

How near they are to us I don't pretend to know so you will have to consult some correspondent.

Friday, November 18--

Once more I will undertake the task of finishing this epistle.

For the past two days I know of nothing worth writing about.

Day before yesterday a detail from this regiment went out to put up telegraph poles from Gen. Sheridan's headquarters. They went as far as Opequon Creek. They could hear the train whistles.

It is reported that the railroad track is laid to within twelve miles of Winchester.

We have heard nothing from the Johnnies of late or from Ewell.

Our cavalry has been reenforced, some say, by six thousand.

Old Mosby is up around Winchester. Our cavalry gets after him every few days and makes him get up and dust out.

This morning most of Co. A. were detailed to go on fatigue, where I don't know.

The weather is quite warm but I expect it will clear off cold before long as it is almost late enough for cold weather down here.

Thanksgiving is close at hand so of course you will have something good to eat for supper. Well, last year I was in hopes that by this time I would be at home. But anyhow if alive and well I shall be at home next Thanksgiving to eat supper with you.

What more news can I write about which will be of interest to you?

Well, I will give you a description of my tent and how we make out to live.

There are five of us--Corp. Williams, Myron, Wm. Johnson of Warren, Jacob June and myself.

We have put our four tents together and cut one tent from corner to corner to put at the ends. We make a stockade about fifteen inches high. In one end we have a fireplace.

The way it is built is this. We dig down about a foot and run a trench out under the tent. Over the trench we put flat stones build a chimney of stones and turf and on top mount a barrel. In this way, we warm our tents.

Our rations have come and we will have a mail. One is to go out and I must send this.

I am well as usual. Give my love to all the family, etc.

From your affectionate brother,
Lewis

Letter #150

Camp Russell, Nov. 20, 1864

Dear Mother,

It is Sunday evening and I have a few leisure moments so will commence a letter to you not knowing when I shall find time to finish it.

Yours of the 8th of November reached me a few days ago. It found me enjoying my usual good health except for a toothache. Today I received a letter from Aunt Alice and one from Alice. There is nothing going on that I know of that is new or interesting.

We have not gone into winter quarters yet although it looks as if most of this army will winter in this vicinity.

Gen. Sheridan's headquarters are between Winchester and Martinsburg.

They are at work on the Winchester R.R. which looks as if the base of supplies (sentence unfinished).

We hear of no rebels around here but Mosby and his men and they are up around Martinsburg and Winchester.

Where the 2nd C.V.A. will winter is a question we often ask but cannot answer.

At present we expect marching orders before long.

It is rumored that Gen. Sheridan is to review the 6th Corps tomorrow afternoon. We may move soon after that. We are in hopes that our next move will be to the defenses but must look to Sheridan for the order.

Co. A. now has but thirty-six men for duty. There are few companies that number over fifty men. I do not think we have over five hundred men in the regiment. Our brigade is not as large as our regiment was when we went out last spring.

I doubt if you think of me oftener than I do of you and home. Hardly a day or an hour passes that I do not think of home and the comforts it contains. But ten more months, then if alive and able to get there, I will not delay.

When I look back over the summer campaign and think of what we have been through, it does not seem that we could go through the same thing again and live.

But I must say goodnight.

November 22nd--

I will finish now if possible.

Our ration train has just come up and there will be a mail and one will go out and I must mail a letter home.

Yesterday the 6th Corps was reviewed by Gen. Sheridan. The day was rainy and very muddy but rain and mud do not stop military movements.

The corps was formed in line by divisions and in two lines of battle which extended over a mile and one half. We were fortunate in not having to march so far as some.

It rained all last night and cleared off this morning with a snow squall.

The Blue Ridge is white with snow.

It is freezing this morning.

Half of our company is about three miles from camp. They are on reserve and have less to do. They have made a hut of brush to live in and have a big fire in front of it.

I have a fire in my tent and am very comfortable.

There is some prospect of our moving before long then we will go into winter quarters.

I have not received the bundle you wrote you were sending me.

Bundles are not apt to come through as quick as letters. That must be the reason. I think it will come around all right.

I think I can draw all the clothes I shall need this winter if we stay in the field. If we should do duty elsewhere it will be different. The only thing I want you to send me is a pair of stockings. Those the government furnish are poor and wear out very quickly and it is more difficult to get them than any other article of clothing.

I have not drawn all of my winter clothing and shall not until we get to winter quarters.

Before long I think I shall send for a pair of boots. I don't like them for marching as well as shoes.

Thanksgiving is close at hand. I see by the papers that the soldiers are to be furnished with a dinner. I hope it will turn out better than the 4th of July dinner did.

The last letter I received from Mary was at Woodstock just after the battle of Fishers Hill. I heard of her death at Harrisonburg. She died the day before the battle of Winchester.

In father's last letter, I found Alice's photograph. She looks some older than when I was at home.

(Remainder missing)

Letter #151

Camp Russell, Va., Nov. 30, 1864

Dear Father,

We are at present living in camp so do not have to pack up every morning and march ten or fifteen miles or more.

There are no rebels here but Mosby's men who are hovering around Winchester and vicinity.

We have had two or three very cold days. The ground froze quite hard. For the past few days it has been warm and pleasant.

As we are not marching I do not have much news to write about. In camp it is the same thing over and over again.

Some of the troops are building winter quarters, out of logs. We have not commenced yet as there has been some prospect of a march or move.

I am in very comfortable quarters. Have fixed my tent and have a small fireplace which sometimes smokes us all out and sometimes burns very well.

We have company and battalion drill almost every day.

Myron is well. He waits upon Adjut. Vaill, is his orderly, does not do any duty in the company.

John Bishop came to the company the 25th. He is looking well. Mr. Miner is well and healthy. He wishes to be remembered to you and all of the family.

I have heard that Mr. Ives of Goshen came to Winchester after the body of Corp. Vaill of Co. C. The corporal was wounded at Cedar Creek and died in Winchester a day or two before Mr. Ives found him.

We have been building forts and earthworks. There are over two miles of them in front of our corps besides as many more in front of the 19th.

The 9th, 12th, and 13th Conn. are encamped a short distance from us.

The 9th Conn. are one side of the pike and we on the other. Thanksgiving passed very quietly. I got turkey enough to taste of. I suppose you ate all you could very well hold of the good things and then felt bad because you could eat no more.

There is no prospect of our leaving the field this winter that I can see.

The railroad track has been relaid from Harper's Ferry to within five miles of Winchester.

We received a mail for the first time in seven days. I received a bundle containing the gloves, stockings, thread, etc., also a Litchfield Enquirer, Pittsburg Christian Advocate, Winsted Herald and Thanksgiving Supplement.

We have just been honored by a visit from Capt. Wadham's widow. She is acting as a nurse in one of the hospitals in Winchester. She stayed part of the afternoon and we all were very glad to see her. She is the first woman with whom we are acquainted that we have seen in a long time.

Mrs. W. told me that it was very difficult for her to obtain a pass as it had to be approved by Gen. Sheridan.

She brought some shirts for our company.

The poor woman shed tears everytime she shook hands with one of the company. She said all of Capt. Wadham's boys were hers and claimed acquaintance with every man in Co. A. whether or not she had ever spoken to him before.

Lieut. Tuttle returned to the company today. Chas Hinsdale came to the regiment. He is still with the supply train and is to go into "park near Winchester."

Today we drew one day's rations of soft bread.

There are rumors in camp that we are to march soon but we don't know when or where.

Yours, etc.

Lewis Bissell

CHAPTER 8

Petersburg
(December 3, 1864-April 5, 1865)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With their work in the Valley completed, the VI Corps was ordered to return to Petersburg. They arrived December 5, and moved to a camp with log houses near Batteries 25 and 27.

For months there was no major fighting at Petersburg, but to celebrate victories of Union generals in other parts of the country, many 100 gun salutes were fired. Grant's plan was to stretch Lee's lines of defense to the breaking point by continuing an encirclement of Petersburg. Being on the far left flank, Bissell was kept busy building breastworks and forts.

From February 5 through 7, there were engagements around Petersburg known as the Battle of Hatcher's Run. The 2nd Connecticut was ordered to the battle on February 6, but Bissell's company did not accompany the regiment because it was detailed to Fort Howard. Soon afterwards, Company A rejoined the regiment at their new camp near Warren's Station, one mile to the east of Fort Fisher which they played an important part in building.

Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term on March 4 and delivered his famous "with malice toward none; with charity for all;" speech. Governor Buckingham was reelected in Connecticut on March 14.

In a desperate attempt to gain victory at Petersburg and cut Grant's supply line with City Point (now Hopewell), Confederate General John B. Gordon attacked Fort Stedman on March 25. There was an initial success, but Gordon could not hold the position and withdrew with heavy losses. Bissell's division was ordered to probe the Confederate lines opposite Fort Fisher to see if Lee had seriously weakened them in launching Gordon's attack. It was decided not to attempt to take the lines then, but days later movements to this end began. It should be mentioned that at this point Grant had about 125,000 men; Lee may have had a third of that number.

On April 1, the Federals successfully attacked Five Forks. The next day an all-out assault was ordered and the VI Corps, minus Bissell's company which was detailed to guard duty, helped in the destruction of Lee's right flank. That evening Lee evacuated Petersburg.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. With the Petersburg siege, Bissell is engaged in an entirely different style of warfare than he had been involved with during the Shenandoah Valley campaign. Do you detect any changes in him due to this?

For two of the major engagements at Petersburg, Bissell was on guard detail and consequently saw no action. How does he feel about missing the fighting? Is this a change from previously held opinions?

Because the trenches were close to each other at various points, the Yanks and Rebs took the opportunity to fraternize. What is Bissell's reaction to this? How is it that men could take time out from the war to socialize with the enemy, and then resume the task of killing?

With the many Confederate deserters coming into the Union lines, Bissell has a chance to meet his enemy. What is his opinion of the Rebels? Has his perception of the enemy changed since his enlistment? What is Bissell's opinion of men who desert the Rebel army? What is his opinion of men who desert the Union army?

In the probing of the Confederate lines after the South's unsuccessful attack on Fort Stedman, a close friend of Bissell's is killed. How does he react to this loss? How is his reaction different from earlier experiences of losing comrades?

The final letter of the chapter is from Lewis' mother. How do you explain the content of the letter? How has Clarrisa Bissell dealt with her son's tenure in the Union army?

Northern Society. With the hope that the war would be over soon, the North prepared itself for victory. The South, on the other hand, was desperately trying to prolong its existence. Bissell receives much information about the South while at Petersburg. What was life like for the Rebels the last half-year of the war? How does this compare with life in the North? What types of dissent were occurring at this time in each section?

The Army. How would you characterize the Union soldiers at Petersburg? Are they confident, well-paid and fully supplied? Do they have competent general officers who command the respect of their troops? In what ways is the army different from the one of 1863 and 1864?

Confederate desertion increased markedly during the Petersburg siege. What happened if they deserted to the Union lines? Conversely, what was the fate of Union prisoners of war? What steps did the South take to prevent desertions? How did the Union army deal with deserters in its own ranks?

The Federals, in some ways, engaged in psychological warfare against the Confederates at Petersburg. Give examples and assess the effect.

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: The Face of Battle by John Keegan
and Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane

The Face of Battle is about war. It is not fiction, but instead a documented and thoroughly researched attempt to portray the sights, sounds, smells and feelings experienced by common soldiers in three widely differing battles. These are: the Battle of Agincourt, fought between the French and the English in 1415 (and, of distinct related interest, one of the principal foci of Shakespeare's Henry V); the Battle of Waterloo, again between the French and the English, in 1815 and the Battle of the Somme in 1916, in which the British lost 400,000 casualties, the French, 200,000, and the Germans, 500,000.

At this stage in Lewis Bissell's letters, you will learn that he is frequently involved in combat during the Siege of Petersburg. You will observe a new style of battle, involving drawn-out trench warfare with occasional hand-to-hand combat. The similarities to the Battle of the Somme and All Quiet on the Western Front should be evident. Is Bissell's experience an early example of modern war? You should note the use of extended trench networks and artillery barrages observed in Bissell's letters and other sources concerning the Civil War.

As you read The Face of Battle, there are several questions that you must note. Firstly, how has the technology of warfare changed from the fifteenth century to the twentieth? You should observe the use of armor, cavalry, and firepower, and ascertain what the principal weapons and techniques of battle were. How did methods of communication and transportation differ?

The second question you must ask concerns discipline, chivalry and attitude towards the enemy. Is there any difference in severity and harshness both towards one's own troops and the enemy's in the battles? Do you feel that there might be a greater concern for human life in the Somme as compared to Agincourt? This is a vitally important question, as you will have to consider whether there has been any change in the moral nature of human beings commensurate with the technological and scientific progress that is clearly evident. Does the treatment of deserters, spies, and prisoners differ from the fifteenth century to the twentieth? Is there any difference in the attitude to the enemy, whether he be French, Confederate or German? Developing this question further, what do you think was the attitude of American soldiers and airmen to their enemy in the Vietnam War?

Thirdly, do you feel that there is any real difference in the reasons and justification of the individuals involved in the battles? Would a soldier have been fighting at Waterloo for the same reasons that Bissell fought at Cold Harbor? What motives might individuals have for going to war? Consider mercenary reasons, duty, patriotism, desire for revenge, glory--and even a total lack of motive, as when soldiers are drafted or impressed, and coerced into taking part in war.

Finally, what are the causes of these different wars? This is an enormous question, but you might be able to reduce it to a very general answer. There are certainly specific causes in every case, but you might observe a common cause behind any action that involves physical coercion and the use of violence.

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is a short story written in 1893 by Stephen Crane. It is not a story about war, but is instead concerned with how American society was changing throughout the thirty years following the Civil War. As you noted in chapter seven Crane was a realist: he wrote not about great actions and exalted personalities but was instead concerned with ordinary and powerless individuals caught up in forces beyond their control. Just as the young soldier in The Red Badge of Courage is involved in a battle which he cannot comprehend and has no power over, so is Maggie struggling and floundering in the harsh and uncaring world of New York in the 1890's. She cannot make decisions, as they are already made for her. Like Lewis Bissell, or Paul Baumer, she must manage as best she can. Life, for Crane, is a battleground in which only the strong and powerful survive--or the lucky. Maggie is neither strong nor lucky.

As noted earlier concerning The Red Badge of Courage, Crane was greatly influenced by Darwin's Theory of Evolution, which had been published as the Origin of Species in 1859. In the late nineteenth century, a social philosophy, known as "social Darwinism", had become current. Find out the exact meaning of this term and attempt to ascertain whether Crane might have agreed or disagreed with the theory and on what grounds he might have done so. Also determine what Crane's purpose might have been in writing this story. This is your writing assignment for chapter eight.

Chapter 8

Petersburg
(December 3, 1864-April 5, 1865)

Letter #152

On the Potomac, December 3, 1864

Dear Father,

I presume by the time this reaches you you will have heard that the 6th Corps is once more on the move bound for some point down around Richmond or farther south, perhaps Wilmington or Charleston.

We left our camp early on the morning of the 1st, marched to the railroad, a distance of nine miles, got on the cars and reached Harpers Ferry about 4 P.M.

The cars ran all night.

We reached the Relay House just before daylight and Washington about eight o'clock.

We were run down to the docks where we got off and were put on board the transport Massachusetts.

All of our regiment are on board.

Where we are bound for not a man of us knows. But it is the opinion of most of us that we are bound for Gen. Grant's army.

Just before we went on board we drew four days' rations of cooked pork, one of soft bread, and three of hardtack, and coffee. So we had to start with seven days' rations which makes us think we are bound for some other port.

The captain of the boat tells us we are to get off at Ft. Monroe and get on board another boat.

The corps left by divisions, one division at a time, the 1st going first.

By the way, we are getting along I think they are in a hurry to get us somewhere.

Everything has gone along very well. A good many got their canteens filled just before they went on board so for a while there was a strong smell of whiskey. Before morning it quieted down some.

We are packed away so close that there is hardly room to lie down.

The weather has been foggy and rainy but not very cold.

We were in hope that if we had to winter in the field it might be the Valley. But it seems we are not allowed the pleasure of going into winter quarters but will have a winter campaign. This seems rather tough after marching and fighting as much as we have this fall.

There is nothing more to write about just now. Perhaps I shall find time to write more before the mail closes.

At Gen. Meade's headquarters, Parke's Station, Dec. 5th--

I presume you are wondering why I don't write or why you don't get a letter from me.

I should have written before but as we have moved so often

that it was almost impossible to get out writing materials before we received orders to move again. That is one reason. Another is we have been on the jump so I did not have time.

I should have mailed you a letter in Washington but the men got ahold of whiskey and got to carrying on and running around the city which kept the company officers very busy.

December 7th--

There will be a mail out today and I will add a few more lines before I close and let you know our whereabouts.

We are not over a mile from where we were last spring. Gen. Meade's headquarters are not more than a mile from here. We did picket duty on the very ground where his headquarters are now, just before the raid on Reames Station.

The place where we are is called Parke's Station, I think.

We took transports at Washington on the 2nd inst. steamed down the river below Alexandria and came to anchor for the night.

The next morning we started down the river, sailed all day and the next night. When I awoke in the morning I found myself well up the James. We passed Ft. Monroe about one during the night.

We landed at City Point the 4th. Here I saw Geo. DeForest and Lyman Painter who at one time lived in Bantam.

We marched a mile or more from the point and went into camp for the night. It was very still so we could hear the picket firing very plainly.

Got up the morning of the 5th at 4 A.M. and was ready to move at six. Took the cars and traveled twelve miles or more. Got off at Parke's Station where Gen. Meade's headquarters are located. Stayed here most of the forenoon. We were then marched about a mile to the right and relieved a regiment of the 5th Corps.

We found good log huts awaiting us. All we had to do was put our tents on for roofs. The huts are twelve by eight, have a fireplace in one end and bunks one above the other. There is a door in the side.

There has been no picket firing in front of us for the past five weeks but in front of the 2nd and 9th Corps the pickets keep up a continual fire most of the time.

The cars run within a half mile of us.

There is a battery here known as Number 25.

The pickets are out three quarters of a mile and not over twenty rods from the Johnnies.

The 6th Corps is to relieve the 5th Corps. Where they will go we, of course, don't know. Some think Grant will lengthen his lines toward the Southside R.R. Well, I hope he will not take us to do it.

Last night there was a fire in Petersburg. We could see the light and hear the bells ringing the alarm.

(Not signed)

Letter #153

Parke Station near Petersburg, Va.
December 15, 1864

Dear Father,

I presume by this time you are looking for a letter from me.

Yours and Alice's reached me in due time.

I am getting along very well. We are quietly encamped for the

present. When the 5th Corps came back from their raid to the Danville R.R. we expected we would move out and they would take their old place. But we are still here.

Everything in our immediate vicinity goes on very much as before. When the weather is very cold there is scarcely any firing on the picket line but when it comes off warm they will open with renewed vigor and keep it up for a night or two. Then it becomes an old story and they are less active.

As to what is going on you will find out more from the papers than from me. They have the chance and opportunity.

Hardly a night passes but some of the Johnnies desert to our lines.

One came in a few nights ago. He was, at the time, on picket. In the night, he left his post, threw off his straps and crawled up toward our pickets and signaled his intention of coming in. He crawled as far as he could then gathered his feet under him and did not stop to let the grass grow until he was safe and beyond the reach of rebel bullets.

For some time past our pickets and the rebels have exchanged papers and coffee for tobacco. But now Gen. Meade has issued an order forbidding it.

There is no artillery firing in our front but in front of the 9th there is hardly an hour of the day when a gun is not fired. Sometimes we can see the shells burst in the air.

Since I last wrote some of our boys have come back from the hospitals. For our company there was Wm. Plumb, Norman Perkins, and James Osborn. They are all looking well and healthy.

All of our company who are here are comfortably well except some who have hard colds, brought on by being out in the storm of Dec. 9th, when we were down on the left supporting Gen. Warren's command on their way back.

Many of our men had poor shoes, the quartermaster department being behind hand in furnishing them. Since then we have been well shod and furnished with pants and stockings, so at present we are well off.

I presume you have read of the doings of Gen. Warren on the Danville R.R. Perhaps it will be useless for me to give you a description of it.

However, on the afternoon of Dec. 9th we were ordered to pack up and were headed toward the left. We joined the 3rd division of our corps as the 2nd had not arrived.

We marched very fast and reached our rear picket line at about eight o'clock in the evening.

We were told to make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the night. It had been snowing but now it was almost raining.

We were in pine woods so went to work and built large fires. I pitched my tent under a holly tree, cooked and drank my coffee, ate some hardtack and lay down for the night. I slept very well.

I awoke in the morning and found the ground covered with ice and snow.

Orders came to pack up and be ready to move immediately. My tent was like sheet iron but I made out to roll it up and strap it on my knapsack.

We were filed toward the front. It looked as if we might

have a brush with the rebels before long. We went in this direction but a short distance and then filed to the right.

Now we were moving toward camp but keeping our front toward the enemy.

At about ten o'clock we halted and commenced cutting down trees to make breastworks. Then we built fires to dry out wet feet for it had thawed and was very "sposhy" and muddy.

We cooked dinner dried our tents and blankets and had them packed when we were ordered to fall in.

Soon we were on the road to camp. We marched as fast as we could but it was like taking one step forward and slipping two backward. Before we reached our camp the mud and snow was over shoe deep and the men were nearly tired out.

I put up my tent and slept soundly all night.

Thus ended the expedition. How much was accomplished by it I have not learned.

Some of our brigade who were on picket were asked by the rebel pickets what had become of the 5th Corps. Our answered that they did not know. "Well," said the Johnnies, "they are down tearing up the Danville R.R. and committing other depredations." Since then the 5th Corps has come back.

December 18th--

I guess you will wonder what is the matter with me because I do not write.

Well, for the several days past I have been very busy helping make out the pay rolls and have not found time to write to you or anyone.

My health is very good.

Last night I received yours and Phillips letters of December 14th. I must thank you for writing so long and such good letters.

We are still having very quiet times and pleasant weather, but there is no telling when the storm of powder and balls will burst upon us.

Our company comes off picket this morning and they will have something to tell of their experience on picket duty which may be interesting or exciting.

Capt. Fenn who lost an arm at Cedar Creek has returned to the regiment and reported for duty. He lost his right arm. It was taken off close to the shoulder.

I hear that Capt. Shumway has applied for his discharge. His leg troubles him too much to be in the field.

Our boys have just come in from picket.

The rebel posts, earthworks, and pickets are within speaking distance of ours. Our men are ordered not to fire unless they advance on us.

A part of our picket line is in the woods, the rest in the open fields. They have thrown up a small works, big enough to cover six men and also one large enough for one man out in front--about fifteen or twenty yards. They have a small hut made of logs which protects them from the weather. These "posts" are about fifteen yards apart.

Fort Sedgwick or Hell as it is usually known is a mile and one half from here. The pickets in front of it keep up an almost continual fire. The pickets are very near each other.

Myron has just come in and says that Thomas has thoroughly whipped Hood taking a large number of prisoners, a large quantity of arms and ammunition, and all his artillery.

When the Johnnies hear this they will not thank Mr. Thomas very much. But they still keep on building up their works and starving.

Night before last three rebels deserted to our lines. One was a rebel conscript. He had been in service four months. He had had a bounty of \$50, with it he had bought two meals of victuals. The rest of the time he had gone hungry. Being on picket he took the opportunity to desert to where he thought he could find enough to eat and clothes to keep him warm.

I think it is Grant's intention to use up the enemy's army everywhere but in front of Richmond and keep the largest part of Lee's army cooped up here while the rest are being subdued.

The Richmond papers give no encouragement for prospects of peace, only independence. Davis knows when they will be--never.

Most of the company are well. There are but few sick in camp. All of the boys send their best respects. I do also.

Lewis Bissell

Letter #154

Before Petersburg, Virginia
December 21, 1864

Dear Brother Phill:

I presume you wonder why I don't answer you letter. Well of late I have been busy writing out pay rolls although we will not get any pay before the fifteenth of January. Then we will have four months' pay.

Last night it commenced raining and this morning the camp was flooded, as it is very swampy. Some who have just come in from the picket line say that the Johnnies are about drowned out. Their pickets are in low swampy ground.

Yesterday afternoon a battery was sent out to the picket line in anticipation of an attack but none has been made.

Yesterday fifteen Johnnies came in to army headquarters. They represent things as looking very dark and hopeless. They thought they would rather run the risk of being shot in the attempt than run the risk of battle and the rebel government's promise of pay and plenty to eat.

We are making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances will permit.

The regiment is slowly filling up with men who have been in the hospitals, sick or wounded. No recruits have come to the regiment in some time.

Gen. Wright asked Col. Hubbard if the regiment could be recruited up to its full number. The colonel told the general that there were people in Connecticut who had received letters from members of the regiment and others who took and read papers, so they knew how the regiment had been used. If any wanted to enlist for infantry they would enlist in an infantry regiment. If they wanted to enlist for artillery they would join a regiment that was acting as such and not join one that had to act as infantry.

I don't expect we will be recruited up as long as we remain in the field. Col. Hubbard and Col. Abbott are at work trying to get

us in with the 1st Conn. I don't know that they can accomplish anything but live in hopes.

There is a rumor afloat in camp that furloughs are to be given. How true it is I don't pretend to know but hope it is so. If it is, I will put my best foot forward and do my very prettiest to get one just as soon as possible. But one thing is certain, you must not expect me until I come.

Wille Plumb has been here eight days. This morning an order came for him to report to a conscript camp at New Haven. He leaves tomorrow morning. I am glad that he is fortunate. Wish I might have been. Think I might have been more sure of a furlough and farther away from rebel bullets.

Myron has a very good place. All he has to do is take care of a horse. Theodore does not do anything else.

As for myself, I am a non-commissioned officer, therefore, cannot be detailed away from the company. There are but two corporals in the company for duty, Eben Oakes and myself.

We have to go on guard oftener than the "poor privates" but don't have to walk a beat, can stay by the fire while they are out in the cold. (Illegible).

I don't think any active military operations will take place. However, so long as they don't call upon me they may operate just as much as they please.

I think the 6th Corps has done its part in the spring, summer, and fall campaigns and (remainder illegible).

It is reported in camp that the army will not go into winter quarters until after the first of January. However, we are in them as much as we ever will be.

We draw rations in the company for forty-nine men. We have about the smallest company for duty in the regiment.

Since we left the defenses last spring over seventy of our company have been killed and wounded. Ten of these have returned for duty and two have died of disease. Twenty-two have been killed by bullets. Quite a number we have not heard about so cannot tell whether they are dead or alive.

December 22nd--

I write my letters at odd spells.

I am the only corporal in the company and have more to do.

Will Plumb left this morning to report to the conscript camp for duty. He has a good place. Wish I were as well placed.

Col. Mackenzie expects to be promoted to a brigadier general.

Col. Abbott of the 1st Conn. Art. has a star on his shoulder.

Col. Hubbard says that furloughs for fifteen days will be given to a certain per cent of men and officers. If such is the case, my chances are as good as any in the company.

I must close. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

When you are settled down at Aunt Julia's write. It won't hurt you.

From your affectionate brother,
Lewis

Dear Father,

I have neglected answering your long and unusually interesting letter until this late day but will start one not knowing when it will be finished.

Of late they have kept me unusually busy. I have been the only corporal in the company for duty therefore I have to do my own duty and that of the others.

The weather of late has been foggy with some rain. It is quite muddy in places so much so that active military operations around this vicinity have come to an end.

Since the fall of Savannah and the defeat and rout of Hood, desertions from the enemy's army have been more frequent.

The rebel deserter's stories corroborate each other--all say about the same thing. They represent the Confederate cause as hopeless and the want of enough to eat and clothes to keep them comfortable as the common complaint throughout the entire rebel army.

A salute of one hundred guns was fired in honor of the fall of Savannah and the defeat of Hood.

It must be a very gloomy time for them in Richmond.

One of our regiment from Co. L. was taken prisoner last August when we retreated the first time from Strasburg and skirmished at Charlestown and fell back to Halltown.

This man was taken to Staunton. As he was sick he was put in their hospital where each man got hardly enough to keep the breath of life in him.

He recovered from the fatigue of the journey and was taken to Richmond and put in the famous Libby prison.

At one time this was guarded by boys of fifteen years of age who took much delight in putting a ball through a damned Yank's head if they came within ten feet of the windows and doors.

Afterwards they were guarded by old gray headed men, many of whom limped from one end of their beat to the other.

As this man's health was very poor and rations poorer still he was fortunate enough to be exchanged.

You will remember that not long since the rebel exchange commissioner declared all of their men that we had paroled exchanged and our commissioner did the same. The rebels fell short and had to make up the deficiency by releasing some of our men then prisoners. Their doctors examined them and sent the sickest to us.

This Co. L. chap happened to be just sick enough to be exchanged. He was taken down the James, in the hold of a boat until after they had passed their fortifications, to the place appointed for the exchange.

Wednesday--

By today's mail I received your letter dated December 18th. I received yours of the 6th and 7th of Dec. a few days ago.

By today's mail I send you my old diary. I wish you would send me one. Let it be a blank book with a good strong cover and back, suitable to carry in my pocket, thicker and larger in every way than that I am sending home. One as large again if not larger.

With it send a fine toothed comb. I cannot buy a book here that is good for "shucks." Such as they are are the poorest in the market and sell for the highest price. Perhaps Riverius will know what I want.

In the year to come I will try to keep a better and more correct record than that I have sent you.

I lost the one I started out with from Belle Plain at Cold Harbor and did not have an opportunity to get another until near Frederick, Md.

The weather has been quite moist and foggy. Have had but a few cold days in some time.

This evening there is some shelling going on up at Fort Hell. We can see some of the shells burst over the rebels works.

I must close.

The boys are getting on very well.

With much love for all, I am

Yours etc.

Lewis Bissell

P.S. There is an express agent here at Parke Station. If you make up your minds to send me a box direct it to the regiment, brigade, division and corps Parke Station, via City Point, Va. No spirituous liquors or nails are allowed to be sent. If found are confiscated.

December 29th --

Will scribble a few more lines.

It clears off one hour and rains the next.

I suppose Phill after he graduates this winter will astonish somebody one of these days. I think my letters would more than astonish some if they should see them.

I do not know how any extracts from my letters got into the war record of the Wadhams brothers unless Parson Vaill got hold of some of them. I think he wrote the article. Don't know who else it could be. But I must adjourn.

Goodbye for the present,

Lewis

Letter #156

Before Petersburg, Va. Jan. 2, 1865

Dear Father,

I received your very interesting letter New Years afternoon.

That morning I had just come off two days' picket duty.

We went on picket Friday morning and came off Sunday morning.

Friday night was very dark. We were about eight hundred yards from the rebel pickets. Those in front of us were out in an open field. We were in the edge of some woods and had a little advantage on them.

Our right joined the 9th Corps and was in heavy timber, the left on the edge of the woods.

The picket posts are about three or four rods apart with from four to seven men on a post. One man is sent out in front of each post about three or five rods according to the nature of the ground.

He is relieved every hour night and day. At night two are kept awake on picket post beside the vidette.

All day Friday it looked very much as if it might be a stormy

night. It was almost as dark as Egypt ever was.

I was on picket with six men.

When a man is on picket at night he is monarch of all he surveys. No one living has more absolute power than he. His word is law. It is death to the man who dares to disobey his commands at night or in fact at any time. A nation's welfare and destiny are resting on him. It is a business that cannot be trifled with. If anything can test a man's bravery and patience it is picket duty in front of a treacherous foe for there is no knowing when or from where he will come.

About dusk Friday night Dec. 31st a rebel deserter came over to our lines. He told our pickets that the rebels intended to attack our lines that night.

This was in front of the third brigade of our division.

The men on picket were green as to their duty and did not pay very strict attention to the informant or they would have been more on their guard.

At about five o'clock in the morning, we heard rebel yells then a volley or two on our left. This made our men cock their muskets as they did not know what would come next.

Then came another yell and a volley and the Rebs went back.

Afterwards we learned that they surprised our pickets, captured twenty-one and wounded three.

Almost all day the rebels all along the line kept yelling, "How are you Yank?" But our boys gave them as good as they sent.

It has been reported in camp that Lee has told his army that on New Years he would show them something that would please them.

This news was fetched in by deserters. So Saturday night we made up our minds that Lee's pickets would not surprise us.

During the afternoon it snowed quite hard but at dark stopped and froze up hard.

That night but few slept. Most of the men sat around the fires with their muskets in hand.

The hours seemed double in length and toward morning every eye was wide awake and every ear alive. But daylight came and the Johnnies stayed at home.

I suffered some from toothache and watched the old year out and the new year in so you see I commenced the new year on picket before the fortifications of Petersburg and Richmond.

As I looked across the plains to the rebel lines I could not but wonder where I and the rebel pickets would be next New Years. I hope to be at home and hope the rebel will be at his and the war ended.

A few posts from where I was was a tall tree to which a ladder had been attached. By this one could go up about one hundred feet and see Petersburg, the rebel camp and the rebel works very plainly.

I went up some sixty feet and would have gone to the top but it was very windy.

We were relieved Sunday morning and made the best of time back to camp.

January 4th --

Last night it commenced snowing. This morning the ground is white.

Sunday was quite cold and chilly. Monday it thawed some and yesterday it thawed more still.

Nothing new or exciting is going on around us.

Everybody is at work fixing up winter quarters but Gen. Grant says that the army has not gone into winter quarters yet. What is more I think it will not.

The chaplain is around and holds meetings in the commissary tent on Sundays. The rest of the time we see but little of him. Messrs. Jones, Bishop and Osborn are well. Some of the men have hard colds.

The adjutant has had his sword straightened and scoured bright.

Jo Vaill was here yesterday morning but I did not see him. Capt. Mason had not arrived at City Point when he left.

Col. Mackenzie has been promoted to a brigadier general and now wears a star on each shoulder. I hope he feels much better.

Lieut. Col. Hubbard will be the next colonel. Maj. Ells has resigned. I hear Capt. Shumway has been discharged.

The regiment is reduced in officers and men although a few are coming back from the hospitals. Two of those wounded at Cold Harbor will never come back to the regiment for duty.

January 6 --

I have not been able to mail this letter for which, no doubt, you are looking.

Yesterday I was on guard and did not find time to mail it and this morning the division was ordered out under arms to see a deserter shot. So, of course, I had to go.

The deserter belonged to the 4th New York Vols. He was tried by court-martial and sentenced to be shot in the presence of the division, by order of Gen. Grant, so the sentence read.

The division formed three sides of a square, the fourth side being left open. Here the grave was dug.

The different brigades formed two lines about two rods apart.

The doomed man rode in an ambulance with a chaplain. His coffin was carried in front of him.

First came an officer on horse back riding with drawn sabre. He was followed by a band of music, then twelve men with arms reversed, next the coffin then the criminal following him twelve more men with arms reversed.

In this formation they marched around the line to the open grave. Here they halted.

The coffin was placed a few feet in front of the grave. The criminal was helped out of the ambulance and the chaplain prayed with him.

Then two men took him, placed him on his coffin, fastened a handkerchief over his eyes and tied his feet and hands.

At a signal twelve muskets were discharged and the criminal fell dead across his coffin, his heart pierced with eight or ten bullets.

He was buried and his grave leveled.

The weather threatened rain early this morning, by eleven A.M. it was drizzling and by noon raining quite hard. The mud was ankle deep.

December 8 --

You will wonder times without number why I don't answer your

letter, but I have been so busy it is not mailed yet.

The men are very well.

Nothing in the shape of news.

I hope you will pardon this long delay.

I remain your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. Myron says he wrote home for a box to come by express to Adjutant Vaill. The secretary of war published an order forbidding express being sent to soldiers after Jan. 1st.

It can be sent in an officer's name so if you, Mr. K. or Parson Vaill send one, direct it to Theodore and it will be all right. Direct same as a letter, to City Point.

Letter #157

Before Richmond, Virginia, Jan. 17th, 1865

Dear Father,

I received yours and Phill's letters of the 5th and sixth on the 12th. Also I have yours of the 12th containing two very interesting letters of Mrs. W. I am very thankful for all of them.

Yours of the 15th was a long time in coming through. Letters usually come through in four days but sometimes they are a month on the road.

I am very well at the present time, so are most of the boys in Co. A.

I was much interested in perusing the letters of Mrs. W. The half has not been told although all she has written is true, every word of it. She has given an accurate description of what she has seen and experienced. We have not heard from her since we left the Valley or rather I have not.

As to the robbing of our wounded and dead at the battle of Cedar Creek, I can swear to that as I was an eye witness.

In regard to writing to soldiers that are in the field or in the hospitals, sick or wounded, what she has written is true, every letter of it. Many a man's life has been saved by just a letter or letters from friends. When he begins to be down spirited medicine will do little or nothing to revive him but a single letter from home will arouse him; he will have something to think of which will keep him from being discouraged and down hearted.

Since I last wrote you J-j-j-Jo Vaill has been here and stayed overnight with Theodore. I saw him but a moment.

Capt. Mason was here when the deserter was shot. I saw him just long enough to speak with. He is looking quite smart.

Wille Plumb was here Sunday and stayed overnight. He came down from New Haven with recruits and left them at Bermuda Hundred. He is looking first rate. Left the next morning.

They have been changing our old Enfield rifles for Springfields--our cartridge boxes for the patented ones. These are carried on the front of the body. They are made to carry sixty rounds. Our old ones carried only forty. There is a knapsack to go with the new cartridge box.

Yesterday afternoon orders came for us to pack up and be ready to move at a moment's notice. We packed up.

The rebels were reported to have thrown out a heavy skirmish line in front of the 9th Corps. A few shells were thrown.

Also it was reported that the enemy was massing in front of the 2nd Corps.

When night came we were ordered to unpack and we have not moved out as yet.

We have been building an abatis in front of our picket line to prevent the Rebs from attacking the line.

Now we go on picket for twenty-four hours instead of forty-eight.

Co. K. was on picket Sunday night and came off Monday.

Frank Parker told me that while they were out a rebel deserter came into our lines on a post near him but in the 1st Brigade.

Frank talked with him for some time. This young rebel, he was about eighteen years of age, belonged in a N.C. regiment.

He said he was conscripted or else he would have never been in the army. He was opposed to the war and so was his father who wrote him to do the best he could for himself and get out as soon as he could.

When asked how they fared for rations he said they got hardly enough to keep themselves alive. He had received a box from home, for the rebel government encourage their people to send boxes to the soldiers, and had had a right smart breakfast and supper out of it.

When it gave out he did not know how he could get anything more. So as he looked across to our picket lines where there was plenty to eat he decided it was one of two things: either life or death. He concluded to run the risk.

Three shots were fired but none aimed at him for they shoot just to clear themselves not to hurt anyone.

He was dressed in the rebel gray with a blanket thrown over his shoulders. His hat was lost in his flight.

Frank said that if he ever saw anyone who was happy it was this young rebel. He said he would go north and remain there until the war was over, then return home and tell his father that he had done his best for Rebeldom.

When asked what he did when he was hungry said that once he ran away from camp and went into Petersburg and got supper. When he came back the lieutenant put him on double duty and sent him to the picket line in front of Fort Hell.

The next time he went on picket he got out of rations and ran away to Petersburg again and got another supper.

When he got back the lieutenant told him he would be put on double duty the next day. But when the next day came he was safe under the Stars and Stripes.

Almost all of the troops in front of us are from N.C. They say they will never charge on our lines and will fire over our heads.

When asked what they thought of the fall of Savannah and the defeat of Hood said their officers told them it was a Yankee story got up to discourage their men and encourage ours. As for Jeff Davis, he had about run his race. Both the people and the army were tired of him and of the war.

This I have from Frank and give it to you as he told it to me. I did not see the Johnny. Wish I might have had the opportunity.

This afternoon a salute was fired in front of the 9th Corps in honor of some victory. Rumor has it, the fall of Fort Fisher.

Whatever it is it is one more blow toward smashing the rebellion.

This deserter said they had sent all the troops from Richmond and Petersburg down to defend Wilmington. As for recruiting their army it was impossible unless they took the blacks.

He added that the rebel army was discouraged and nothing but the strictest discipline kept them under.

Wednesday, Jan. 18th--

Nothing new has transpired during the night.

Various rumors are afloat concerning the salute that was fired yesterday. We hope it was because of some good news.

I have passed the letters of Mrs. W. among the boys who seem to be very much interested in them.

Capt. Fenn is back here. He is on Gen. Mackenzie's staff. He lost his right arm close to the shoulder, at Cedar Creek.

If Capt. Shumway is discharged our company will have had two complete sets of officers since we first came out. I see that the papers have it that he has been promoted to a major, which is doing an injustice to some of the other officers.

Dwight Kilbourn is well and in command of Company C.

At present there are twelve line officers in the regiment for duty--two are captains Spencer and Marsh but rest are lieutenants.

The regiment draws rations for over seven hundred men. Over thirty of this company were taken prisoners at Cedar Creek.

A few are returning from the hospitals but there are a good many who will never be able to do so.

As to furloughs, it is my opinion that few, if any, will be given this winter. Gen. Grant says that the army has not yet gone into winter quarters so I suppose no furloughs will be granted, except in cases of life and death, until after the army goes into winter quarters.

That will not be this winter for Grant has not put an army in winter quarters since he took the field.

I think the barrel will come through in time. It takes much longer than when we were in Alexandria.

I must think of winding up this yarn for perhaps too much of a good thing is good for nothing.

Tell Phill I shall answer his letter in a few days.

Mr. James Osborn sends his best respects and says if he lives to return home he will make you a visit.

Mr. Jones is well as usual.

Myron and Theodore are well.

The mud is drying up so that we can get around.

There seems to be a good deal of speculation about Mr. Blair's mission to Richmond. I do not believe it will amount to much. But as the boys say "Can't most always tell until it has been tried."

Last night I received a letter from Uncle Erastus, dated Jan. 8th. At the time of writing they were well.

Give my love to Aunt Thankful and all of the aunts, uncles and cousins.

Enclosed are two rebel postage stamps that were taken from the pocket of a dead rebel at Fisher's Hill. They are genuine.

I have seen some Confederate money in bills of \$100 and \$500.

Some of the bills have been printed in England and had run the blockade.

The chaplain holds prayer meeting twice a week as it is too cold to hold divine services out of doors.

I have but seven months and a few days to service. It may seem a short time to you but to me it is seven months too long. Give my love to mother and all of the family.

From your most affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #158

Before Petersburg, Va., Jan. 21, 1865

Dear Brother Phill,

I presume that you are looking for a letter from my pen so here it is.

Today is very stormy. It commenced by raining and freezing. The pines are beginning to bend a little under the ice. It continues to storm and makes it hard to move around out of doors.

Tuesday I was on picket but got off before the storm.

While on picket some of our men exchanged papers with the Rebs. One man from Co. H went out and met the rebel who was a sergeant. He said that one of these fine mornings we might see him over our way.

They traded jack knives. The Reb wanted the cross cannons on our man's cap but he did not let him have them.

They exchanged papers but I did not see it.

The rebels are forbidden to hold intercourse with the enemy but when their officers are out of sight they will exchange papers. If caught they are court-martialed and punished.

I was talking with some of the 9th Corps who told me that in some places their lines were so close to each other that they threw a frying pan over to the rebels for them to cook in. When they had finished with it they threw it back.

Our pickets in front of Fort Hell are ordered to fire a shot from each picket post every ten minutes, whether the Rebs fire or not. Of late the rebels have not fired as often as our men. They do not wish to throw away so much powder and ball.

By the way, I hear Fort Fisher has capitulated to Maj. Gen. Terry and Admiral Porter. How are you blockade running after this?

The Richmond papers seem to think it is an unfortunate disaster for them. The Charleston papers are putting on doleful looking faces and becoming what the Richmond Examiner calls "weak kneed."

Sherman is coming up that way and no doubt will set himself down in front of them and watch like a cat watching a mouse hole.

But you will say "Enough."

Good Osborn came back Thursday. He is looking first rate.

Wednesday about thirty recruits arrived for this regiment but none came to this company. They are good looking able men. Came down the time Wm. Plumb came.

Company A now numbers about fifty-nine men.

Sunday, January 22nd--

Nothing new has happened that I have heard of.

The mud is ankle deep.

Sergeant Williams is expecting to go home on a fifteen day furlough sometime this week.

Brig. Gen. Mackenzie is away on a fifteen day leave of absence. Some of the officers are getting furloughs but few of the poor privates get any.

I suppose you are enjoying yourself hugely at school down in Morris.

Well, I have had a schooling this summer. I never shall forget its lessons. They do not try the brains of the pupils so much as their courage and patience.

What is in store for us this spring and summer, I don't know.

I must think of drawing this news letter to a close.

I hope I may have the pleasure of hearing from you soon.

Tell Aunt Julia and Uncle Ensign that every day I am looking for a letter from them.

With kind wishes for all, yourself in particular, I remain
your most affectionate brother,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #159

Before Petersburg, Va., Jan. 28, 1865

Dear Father,

I will commence by telling you I am very well just now.

Jack Frost is busy at work. He has outflanked Grant's army and compels it to remain in their quarters as prisoners.

The news from this camp is not very important.

Theodore Sanford has returned to the regiment. Sergt. Williams leaves for home tomorrow on a fifteen days' furlough.

The Rebs are very quiet in front of us. The firing in front of Fort Hell is growing less. The Rebs are now deserting in broad daylight. One or two came in in front of the 1st Brigade of our Division.

I was on picket the 25th. The rebels relieved their pickets after we went on. As I saw them marching along their picket line, I could not help comparing them with so many women with cloaks, shawls, double bustles and hoops, as they had thrown over their shoulders blankets and tents which flapped in the wind.

The next morning they wanted to know if we had coffee. We told them to come over and find out. Coffee is seldom seen in Rebeldom.

A few flakes of snow fell last night, but it was so very cold it could not snow if it wanted to.

I suppose you have heard of the heavy firing up on the James River on the night of the 23rd and 24th. All we know is that our gun boats and the rebels had a set-to. I lay awake until eleven o'clock listening and woke up this morning to hear them still at it.

Tuesday there was no firing until nearly morning when it was as heavy as on the previous night.

I have been reading a description of the battle of Middletown or Cedar Creek from the pen of an officer of the 12th Conn. He was on the staff of Gen. Grover and had an opportunity to see all of the fight from morning until night.

The description is very life like.

Sunday, 1 P.M.--

The weather is cold and has been for the past two days.

Today there has been some mortar firing in the vicinity of the James River. Some of the time it is very rapid then there will be only occasional shots.

Col. Hubbard is in command of the brigade.

The long-looked for barrel reached us last Friday. I was on guard at the time.

Myron was on the lookout for it. I went down to his tent and found him and Ed Hempstead up to their elbows unpacking it and were busy talking about the good things it contained.

Everything was in prime condition. Nothing was injured by the journey. Everything was as in good order as could be expected after having been packed for fifteen days.

I have just dined on some of the mince pie. It was very good considering the length of time it had been made. I have eaten some of the doughnuts and some of the apples. The doughnuts were the first I had tasted in over eight months and the apples the first I have eaten in two months. Here apples cost five cents apiece.

As yet I have not cut the whole cheese. I am gnawing on part of one. Have given some of the boys a taste of it. They say it is the best they have had in a long time.

Cheese sells for fifty cents a pound, butter eighty cents.

The butter you sent is good enough for a king.

I have the stockings on. They are a little large but not enough to do any harm.

The diary is just the kind I wanted. It suits me to a T.

The suspenders are first rate.

The pickles hit the spot, as the boys say. None of the vinegar leaked out.

The papers and envelopes are all safe.

I doubt if you had as much pleasure in packing it as we did in unpacking and eating of the contents.

Words fail to express my thanks for sending it to me.

It has been so long since I have been home that it seemed almost impossible to have such things. When one has been deprived for so long a time one thinks more about them.

The mail will close in a few minutes, so I must say goodbye.

From your most affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. Lyman Sweet was here today. He is looking well and healthy. Says that they are on the extreme left of our lines not far from Hatchers Run.

Letter #160

Fort Howard, February 6, 1865

Dear Father,

I will write you a few lines just to let you know where I am.

The entire army has packed up and is on the move to the left.

It is reported that our men have captured a fort and seven heavy guns.

We were packed all day Sunday and just at dark were ordered to fall in. Companies A, H and K were sent to Fort Howard about a fourth of a mile from camp. Company F is in a fort in the rear of the works. The rest of the regiment is with the corps except the sick and the camp guard.

This morning I saw Joseph Vaill. Yesterday he was out to the left and I think saw the regiment. Says they were preparing for a fight and soon afterwards heard very sharp firing.

The chaplain came back bringing some watches the boys gave him to keep or send home.

Last night troops arrived from City Point to repulse an attack.

But I cannot stay to write more.
There is not much danger of our leaving unless driven out by the rebels.

Yours in haste,
Lewis Bissell

P.S. Two hundred wounded arrived on the cars last night and more expected. It is hailing. We are going to have another storm.
Jo Vaill left for City Point this morning.

Letter #161

Before Petersburg, Va., February 15, 1865

Dear Brother Phill,

I suppose that if I don't write an answer right off you will say I have been too busy sending valentines to write. But I'll disappoint you there. Perhaps you sent an answer so as to have time to send one of your valentines to its destination.

I suppose the newspapers have made folks feel uneasy about the welfare of the regiment. The loss is one man killed, one missing, and eight wounded.

Col. Hubbard was highly complimented by the New York Herald for his part in the action of Monday.

For once Co. A. was fortunate in getting out of the show.

The 5th Corps lost a good many in prisoners and wounded.

At present we are mud bound and so army movements are at an end for the present.

When there is nothing going on for one to see one cannot find much to write about.

Joseph Bradley is expecting to leave tomorrow for home on a fifteen day furlough. He gets it from the hospital as he is a nurse there. Sergt. Williams has not arrived yet from his furlough.

Sunday--

Have finished a letter to Pa and now will procede to finish yours. So what is there in the way of news to write about? Well, it is reported that the rebels came out with a flag of truce near Fort Hell this afternoon. How true it is I am unable to say. The 23rd Army Corps is expected here before long. Most of the Corps is now in Washington and Alexandria. They are expected here. Recruits and convalescents are arriving every day by the boat loads. The army is growing and for anyone not used to seeing an army of men would wonder where they all came from.

From our picket line we have a very good view of some of the rebel forts. They appear to be very strongly fortified. Looks almost impregnable for all that engineering skill and what could do has been done to make them perfect. Gen. Grant has extended his railroad down to the Fifth Corps and now trains are running down there. I suppose one of these days Grant will want it extended to the Southside road and perhaps when there will take it into his head to just try it and see how he likes it.

John Bishop is in good condition. Can eat his daily rations. The only trouble is when they are gone he has to wait until more come around.

Our grub is very good and of sufficient quantity. Once in four days we have raised bread; hardtack the rest of the time, beef once a week, condensed milk and vegetables now and then. Coffee could not be dispensed with. Since I have been in the

army I have become an inveterate coffee drinker. I don't know how I could get along without it on a long march. When in the Valley, we had to march many miles on the strength of the coffee.

I am getting out of news or anything to write about so of course shall have to close.

I am much obliged for the long and interesting letter that this is supposed to answer.

Do you see Cousin Leonard Bissell? Please remember me to him and to Dwight.

If I was out of the army and could get a position as wagon master at \$75 per month, I should jump at it. If one manages right he can get his rations and clothes for little or nothing.

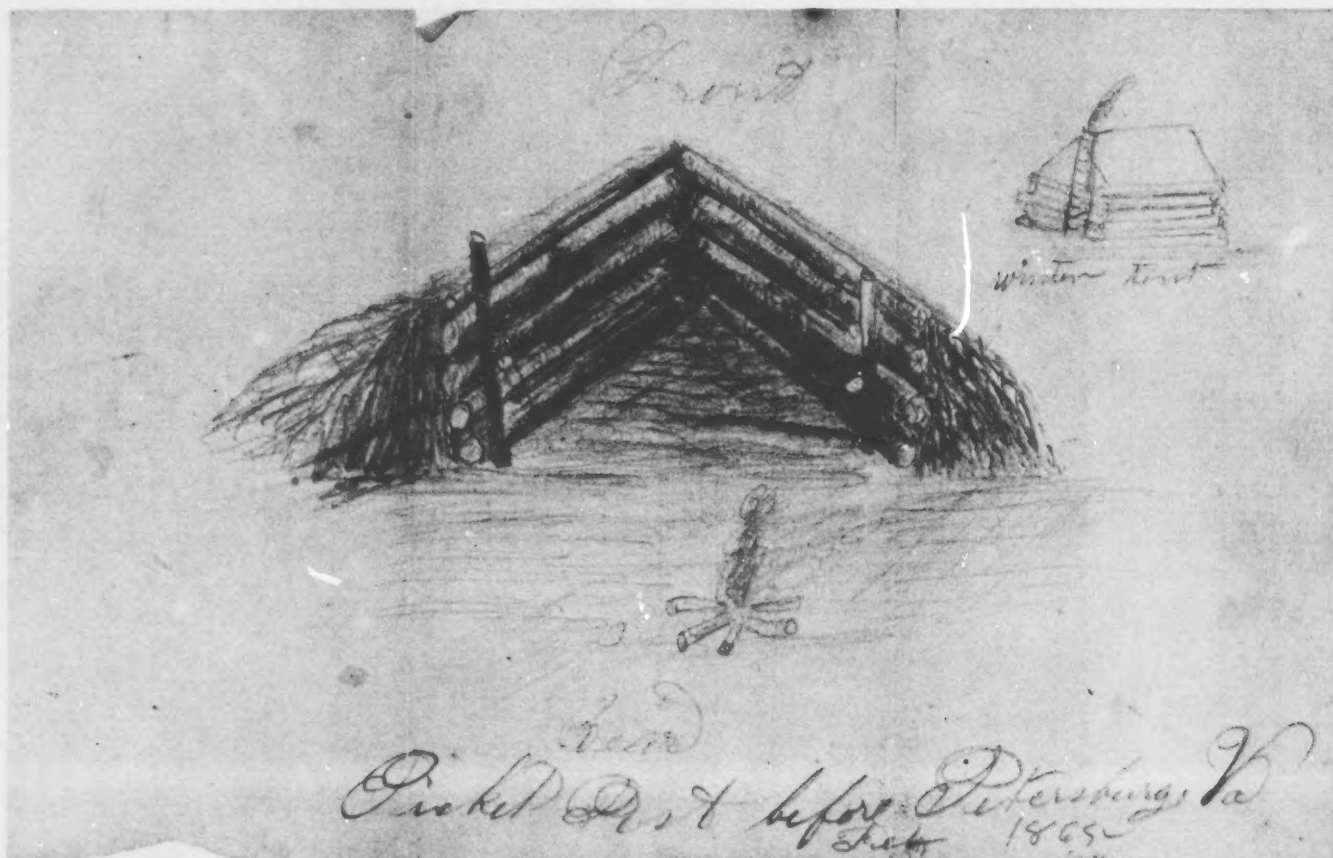
Please tell Aunt Julia that I am looking for a letter from her all of the time.

While I am writing pickets are popping away which means some Johnnies are trying to desert.

Give my love to all the cousins and friends.

From your soldier brother,
Lewis

Sketch sent with letter #163, "Picket Post before Petersburg, Va., February, 1865"



Dear Father,

I presume you and Phill have been looking for a letter from me. I should have written you before this but I am one of the busiest in Co. A. Since we have been in our new camp, I have been unusually busy, so much so that I find night comes around before I know it.

This morning I received your letter of Feb. 11th, I guess you wonder not a little why I don't write. I see you have not received mine of about Feb. 6th which I wrote at Fort Howard when the rest of the regiment was out on the left.

The papers gave Col. Hubbard quite a puff. At one time our brigade held the rebel Mahon division in check until the 5th Corps could form its lines.

Around here everything is going on about the same.

Not far from here they are building a lookout. It has been built up about two hundred feet.

As the country is quite level one can see a long way along the rebel lines and our own.

Sergt. Williams arrived here Friday. Ed Hempstead came this morning. They report it as being very cold up north.

We have had quite cold weather here but not like until what you have had.

We have to go on picket once in five days. The Reb pickets are very quiet and don't seem inclined to show themselves.

The night of the 17th eighteen rebels deserted into our corps lines--fifteen into our division. They were North Carolina and Georgia troops.

If I have to face any rebel music I would rather face the music made by these troops than that of any others. The best fighting troops the rebels have are the South Carolinans and Virginians.

We can tell when rebels are deserting for their pickets are ordered to fire on them. Our boys then know they are coming. The happiest men I see are these deserters. Some, after reaching our lines will yell back to their old comrades that they are safe and have had a good meal and advise them to come over and see for themselves.

Friday night twenty-three deserters came in early in the morning. It was quite dark and for a while there was a lively popping going on. It was all done by the Johnnies, partly to keep their men from deserting and partly to make our men keep under cover. That did not scare our men very much. They kept up a continual yelling all of the time and would blackguard the rebels the best they knew how.

The Rebs are very strict and will not allow their men to exchange papers with ours for in each paper of ours are some of Gen. Grant's orders encouraging desertion from the enemy to our lines.

I received the Enquirer and today Goodwin received a Litchfield Sentinel full of news of Democracy.

The Enquirer has a list of promotions among which is Dwight Stone.

John Bishop is fleshy and over-stocked with a good appetite.

He can consume eighteen hardtack in one day. Mr. Avery Williams has been promoted to be a sergeant.

We are expecting to be paid off with four months pay before the first of March. We will have six months' pay due us but will get only four.

I have not got my state order yet as I have been unable to get any blanks.

I have two pair of stockings. Mother sent me plenty of thread and pins which will last for some time to come.

As it is so near spring, I think I can get along without boots. We have seen our muddiest season. When I come to march I would much rather have shoes than boots. I have worn army shoes since the middle of last June and I can wear them six and one half months' longer. Then I'll kick them off and out of sight.

As I am on guard, I can't tell when this will be mailed but I must close for the present.

Sunday evening--

Will try to finish this epistle.

Dwight Stone has been promoted to a lieutenant and E.G. Osborn to sergeant major of the 2nd C.V.A.

While I am writing Sergt. Hinsdale and Sergt. Major Osborn are in here. One is writing and the other busy at something else.

My health is very good. I only hope it will continue.

When shot and shell are flying around if I can find a safe place for myself I am in for it.

But I must close.

I should like very much to have you send me Charles vignette

Give my love to mother and tell her I should be most happy to receive a letter from her.

Love to all,

From your affectionate boy,
Lewis

Letter #163

Fort Wadsworth, Va., February 26, 1865

Dear Father,

I received yours of February 21st on the 26th inst. I am very thankful for it.

I have just returned from Fort Fisher where I have been at work all day in the rain and mud. There were about one thousand men at work on it--most of them shoveling dirt.

I am told they intend to mount some sixty-four pound Parrotts for the purpose of shelling the rebels rear works.

The rebel troops in front of Fort Fisher have been removed and Virginia troops put in their places as they will not desert so much.

In front of Fort Hell forty came in in one night. They have moved the troops there and now have old gray-headed men and young boys.

More rebels desert in front of the 6th Corps than any other corps in the army around Richmond. When deserters are asked why this is so, some say that if they had to fight they would rather fight any other corps and the only way to avoid it is to desert to them.

I have seen the Petersburg Express of Feb. 23rd. It was about two thirds as large as the Litchfield Enquirer and only one sheet

at that. It confirmed the fall of Charleston and deplored the triumphant march of Sherman's army through S. Carolina.

Wilmington, it said was of no use to them now that Fort Fisher (N.C.) had fallen. The troops it would take to hold it could be used to better advantage elsewhere.

Deserters report that Lee has made a speech to the rebel army and offered to pardon all deserters, except those who had deserted to the enemy, if they returned within twenty days. He also said that no terms of peace except independence would be accepted.

This speech discouraged the men more than ever so it did not help their cause any.

I very much wanted to exchange papers with them but as the Rebs were Virginia troops they would not come out.

Their money is worth two cents on the dollar. Some of the southern planters have disputed as to which was worth more, a pound of cotton or a pound of their currency.

Many of the deserters are men who kept out of the army just as long as possible. Then when conscripted they deserted at the first opportunity.

Within the past few days two mule teams have been driven into our lines by their drivers. They were out in front of their picket lines after wood. One of the teamsters told the officer in charge that he wanted to go a little farther and water his mules at a spring. When he got there he forgot all about watering his mules but put on the whip and drove them into our lines.

Afterwards he drove up to army headquarters where Gen. Meade gave him \$1000 for his team.

The other team came in with a guard of one sergeant and two men. They got the same bounty which was divided between them.

Most all of the deserters bring in their arms. The government pays for them.

But I might go on like this until you become tired of reading about it.

Last night about two o'clock orders came around for us to pack up everything and sleep with our straps on. It was thought that the Rebs were evacuating Petersburg. This conclusion was arrived at partly from what deserters told and partly from what could be seen from our lookouts.

From the one built near Fort Fisher with strong glasses one can see people walking in the streets and a great many of their forts and camps.

They cannot charge without our knowing about it.

We can tell when any Johnnies are coming into our lines for the Rebs fire at them.

But I must close for the night.

Monday--

By orders from Gen. Grant one tenth of the men must be kept under arms at all times. They have put on enough companies to make the detail and Co. A. is on today but I am fortunate not to be one of them.

Last night there was pretty brisk picket firing in front of us. Several balls whistled over this way. They came from the Reb pickets. Some of their men were deserting to our lines.

Of late we have had orders to have our haversacks and knapsacks packed all but our blankets so as to be ready to move in case of an attack or to attack if the Johnnies evacuate Petersburg.

Everyone thinks they will do so by spring and Lynchburg will be the last clinch and there we hope to lynch the Confederacy.

The boys try to exchange papers with the rebels but they will not. I have been watching my opportunity to exchange but have not made it out yet.

Tell Charley I am very thankful to him for his vignette. I shall keep it very choice.

G. Dwight Stone has on his shoulder straps. E.G. Osborn has jumped from private to the highest non-commissioned officer in the regiment--next to a commission. He is worthy and deserves it.

Corp. Williams is detailed from the company on the color guard and has to go with the regiment wherever it goes.

The regiment has been presented with a new battle flag from the state. The state flag has not come yet.

The old flag presented to the regiment by Mrs. Wm. C. Noyes is almost worn out and presents a battle stained appearance. The old regiment will take it back home with them when mustered out of service. The spear head has been shot off and a shell has made quite a rip in one corner of it. Two color bearers have been hit while carrying it. One died of his wounds.

It was the first flag planted on the rebel works in front of our division at Fishers Hill. It has attracted the attention of many generals and troops.

The boys of other regiments say that when they see the colors of the Second Heavies retreating it is time for them to be getting back but so long as it goes ahead there is no need of running to the rear.

Furloughs are not given as freely as before as there is some prospect of a move.

Myron is flourishing as usual. John Bishop lost his voice for a while but found it soon. He is as hale and hearty as ever.

More peace commissioners have gone to Richmond, so it is reported.

But I must think of closing.

It is reported that the paymaster has arrived to pay off the heavy artillery in the field and will soon pay us off. The first of March I shall have six months' pay due me. Will get only four months or \$72.

Enclosed you will find a sketch of a picket post that I scratched off while on picket.

Tell Mother I would like to have her write soon.

Give my love to all too numerous to mention.

From your soldier boy,
Lewis

Letter #164

Before Petersburg, Va., March 5, 1865

Dear Father,

I sit myself down this evening to write you a few lines.

I received your letter dated Feb. 25th or March 4th. It was

a good long letter, just what I like to receive and read. But sometimes I cannot do them justice.

By tomorrow, Monday, you will have Myron among you. Before starting he got four months' pay. He ought to have had eight but there was a mistake in the pay rolls. He will get it next time.

Perhaps he will pay you \$20 that he owes me. I did not see him after he was paid off as I was on picket; you may speak to him about it if you are of a mind to. If he is willing, I should like to have him pay it over to you.

I received four months' pay amounting to \$72.

The next time I write I shall send you about \$60 unless someone is going up that way on a furlough by whom I can send it. If I don't come that way myself, some day.

Of late we are having very busy times. Co. A. has been on duty of some kind almost every day of the past week. We were on picket Thursday and came off Friday morning.

In the morning five Johnnies came in and not a shot was fired. Four of them were after wood a little in front of their lines. It was a rather foggy morning so finding their videttes could not see them the corporal in charge told them to throw down their axes and follow him into the Union lines.

They came up part way and signaled with a paper. Our boys answered with their caps so in they came.

They had the Richmond Examiner of March 2nd. It was a half sheet, only had two pages of reading besides a few advertisements and was poorly printed on poor paper.

It reported Lee as having gone south to fire the southern people to new deeds of valor.

Last night in camp it was rumored that Sherman had administered a sound thrashing to the Johnnies in his front. Also we heard the news of the burning of Columbia by his orders as a retaliatory measure.

I was told today that the corps numbers between twenty-five and thirty thousand men.

This division is the smallest in the corps. It has always been the fighting division of the corps.

Some of the boys have just come in and say that one hundred Johnnies have just come in. I don't know how true it is.

From army headquarters they send five hundred Rebs a week to City Point. From there they ship north about one thousand a week. At that rate the rebels will lose about fifty thousand men in one year, which will be almost one third of their entire army now in the field.

Some more of the boys have come in and state that the report about the one hundred rebel deserters is true.

More popping on the picket line accompanied by some yelling. It comes from in front of the Third Brigade.

We have become so accustomed to picket firing that we can tell if there are any rebels coming in. I hope they will continue to come.

The boys talk about the Johnnies as at home we talk about suckers and eels. The boys will look around in the evening and guess that there will be a good run of Johnnies.

When the rebel pickets begin to pop, out will come the boys and then they will guess how many came over that time.

The chaplain leaves for home tomorrow on a fifteen day furlough. Good Osborn has just come in from the adjutants and says it is reported that Sheridan is in Lynchburg, Va. If so, no wonder the Reb Congress has pulled sticks and left for parts unknown.

I sent by Myron a rubber blanket that I got at Cold Harbor, which has on it the name of Maj. McDonald of the 153rd N.C. troops. The name is not visible to you but if I ever come home will show it to you.

Many are the nights it has shielded my weary bones from the damp cold ground after a long and tiresome march. Keep it for it came from Rebeldom. Your soldier has used it for the past nine months. But I must close for I have come to the bottom of the last sheet. Give my love to mother and all the rest of the family.

Yours in a hurry,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #165

Before Petersburg, Va., March 14th, 1865

Dear Father,

I will stop for a few minutes to write you a few lines to let you know I am still well.

This morning everything was going on as usual when the signal corps stationed in the lookout near Fort Fisher discovered the rebels preparing for a move in some direction.

In the afternoon a long train of rebel ambulances and baggage wagons were seen moving toward our left. At the same time their troops in their rear moved to our left. Also, it was reported that they were massing their troops in front of the 9th Corps.

This corps were under arms and in the trenches all this afternoon.

Tonight after dress parade orders came to pack all surplus clothing and turn in all camp utensils and extra shelter tents to the quartermaster.

The provost marshal has ordered all sutlers to pack their goods and be ready to move at a moment's notice as soon as transportation is furnished them.

The entire army is getting ready for an active campaign in whatever direction Grant's sagacity may direct.

Lt. Dwight Stone, who is in command of the company in the absence of Lieut. Munson, has just come in and says that a telegraph dispatch has just come from City Point direct from Gen. Grant saying that Gen. Scofield was attacked by Hardee. Hardee was whipped and driven across the Neuse River and that Scofield was master of the field and was in possession of the rebel dead and wounded. Also what is more important is that Gen. Couch is within a day's march of our left and will form a junction there.

Sherman is reported to be still marching on. Sheridan has communicated with Grant and says that he has destroyed the James River Canal so it will take months to repair it.

Furthermore, he has burnt a large number of tressel works and bridges and torn up miles of track thus rendering railroad communication with Lynchburg out of the question.

It is surmised that Sheridan intends to join our right unless he meets a stronger force than he has in his command.

The signal officers report that the Rebs had several brigades out in full view of our men, on parade and drills while in the rear a heavy line of troops were marching toward the left. Also that in the vicinity of Petersburg they were pulling down and burning some of their camps.

This noon Mr. George M. Woodruff and Mr. Perkins came here to take the votes of the regiment. I don't know how many voted but this evening it was said two thirds voted for Buckingham.

Mr. G.M. Woodruff said that Seymour's chances were very small indeed.

I have not seen them. When they came I was abed and asleep having just come off guard. Not being a voter I slept on until time for dress parade.

They are staying at brigade quarters to-night. They seem to be quite uneasy and wonder how the men can take it so cool and unconcerned.

All of the sick, lame and disabled have been sent away. The hospitals have been cleared of the sick and are ready to pull up and be off.

This afternoon there was a flag of truce at or near Fort Fisher. It was sent out from our lines, the 5th Corps. Their purpose was removing the remains of some of their men who were buried between the lines. It is surmised that this was not their only object, the principal one being to find out if possible what the Rebs in our front are about just now.

Later reports say that the entire rebel army are making preparations for a grand skedaddle or a last desperate fight.

But I must close for the night.

Wednesday, 15th--

All day long the quartermasters have been busy getting their stuff off.

Last night an order came for the men, in case they move, to take everything with them as they will not return to the old camps.

Some think a great move will be made toward the Weldon R.R. Others think we will start and go southward and attack the rebels in Sherman's front and leave the 9th Corps and the Army of the James to take care of Lee's army.

The weather, at present, is very rainy. Has just commenced. We will have a spell of wet and muddy weather to pay for this.

I suppose Myron will give you all of the required information about army movements.

The boys are well and in very good fighting condition.

I have packed, in a box, an extra pair of pants. Whether I shall ever see them again is more than I can tell.

I have plenty of clothes; all I can carry and march under.

I must close for the present.

Give my love to mother and all the family too numerous to mention.

I have written in a great hurry as I have been very busy.

I remain your affectionate son,

Lewis Bissell

P.S. All the boys send their best respects to "Dea. Bissell."

Dear Father,

It is Sunday and at this time (half past one) you are in church while I am sitting in my log cabin surrounded by the implements of warfare.

While I am writing our brass band is playing sacred music which reminds me of the organ in the church.

The best sacred music I ever heard is played by a brass band.

The weather is very mild. It is as warm here today as it is with you in the middle of May. If birds cared to live in the confusion of camps we would have plenty of them, however, not even a crow or a turkey buzzard who prefers to live between our lines and the enemies will keep us company.

For once the camps are very quiet. Nothing but the music of the various bands breaks the quietness of the day. A few men are roving around the camps.

Yesterday, in company with Sergt. C.W. Hinsdale, I visited the new chapel built by the 50th N.Y. Engineers. I wish you could have had the pleasure of seeing how it is built.

It will hold about fifteen hundred. It is of pine logs set upright. The floor is of hewn logs. The style is Gothic. The spire is well worth seeing. It is framed of small sticks, about the size of a broom stick, fastened and matched together.

The doorway represents an arch of marble and is made of pine poles bent to the required shape and form.

The inside is not entirely finished.

At one end there is a stage and table for the chaplain. One angle was partitioned off by a railing, for officers. Over the door was a gallery for the colored gentry.

Here Gen. Meade's daughter was married to a brigadier in the 5th Corps.

A few evenings ago the chapel was used for a theater. Gen. Meade, Sec. Stanton and a large number of ladies were present. What the performance was I have not learned.

In the 9th Corps there are quite a number of chapels. Some of them are quite handsome and would do for anyone.

We have not been in one place long enough to pitch a chapel tent before it has to be packed up and sent off. Such was the case here a few days ago.

The chaplain is away on a furlough for how long I do not know.

I hope before many weeks elapse we may have the pleasure of hearing the bells of Richmond and Petersburg under the jurisdiction of the Stars and Stripes. How humiliating it will be to those who have kept a stiff upper lip from the beginning until then.

While we were in the Valley last fall I went into quite a number of churches, two at Harrisonburg, one at Strasburg, and one at Newtown. Some were very handsome. The one at Harrisonburg was quite large and had been used by the Rebs as a hospital.

Our surgeons used the churches in Middletown and Newtown as hospitals after the battle of Cedar Creek. Banks had used them when he was in the Valley.

Wherever an army invades its tracks will remain visible for many

years to come.

What records will some, yes all, of the rebellious state have to show. Their deeds cannot be rubbed out nor will they be forgotten.

When a stranger asks, "What was the cause?" What will they say?

Friday night Co. A was on reserve picket at the division post, that is, where the division officer of the division stays.

That night five Johnnies came in. They were all N.C. Militia. One had been in the service six months and that night was his first on picket. They put him on vidette post. He stood about fifteen minutes and left.

One had been in the army three years. He said he never had owned a slave, never expected to and never wanted to. Further he said, "For the past three years, I have fought, as hard as anyone, for slaves. Now that the slaves have been set free, I and hundreds of others, have made up our minds to leave the army."

The rebel officers tell their men that Grant has agreed to exchange deserters with Lee so if they desert they will have to come back and suffer the penalty.

The first question these deserters asked was would Gen. Grant send them back or make them serve in our army. When told no they were very much pleased.

One asked what would be done with them. When told they would be sent north or furnished with employment at good wages, they threw up their old slouch hats and said, "Bully for Uncle Sam."

It is reported in camp this morning that an entire regiment came in last night.

In the vicinity of the Appomattox there was quite a lively time. Our men were shelling the rebel works. It was at dusk. From here we could see the shells very plainly when they burst, as it is a level country.

All extra luggage has been sent off and we are ready for a move at any hour.

It is the opinion of almost everyone that as soon as the ground is sufficiently settled the 6th, 2nd and 5th Corps will cut loose and swing out either to make for Bragg's rear or for the Southside R.R.

The deserters who have just come in admit that the canal is and will be useless and their supplies have only the Southside road. If Grant cuts this, as a great many rebels hope he will, Richmond will be left out in the cold as well as Mobile.

These prisoners report that they have to live on little or nothing. For two days' rations they have one pint of meal and some rice. They cook it and eat it at one meal. Coffee and sugar they seldom see but hear about them from the Yankee lines which is very aggravating.

Almost every writer of a letter that comes to any member of the old 19th seems to be counting the days and weeks when our time will be out, war or no war.

A few days ago three officers were mustered in for three years or during the war.

I should very much like to be home while Uncle Frederick and Aunt M. are with you, but the fortunes of war are very uncertain, therefore, you and I will have to wait until my time is out. The

order came today. If the order had been put off a few days longer I think I should have had a furlough but there is no use of crying over spilt milk.

Give my love to Aunt Maria and Uncle Frederick and their family. Tell them I was in hopes of being able to see them before their return to the west but it was ordered otherwise.

Monday, March 22nd--

Today this division was reviewed by Maj. Generals Meade, Hunt, Wright and five others besides Admiral Porter U.S. Navy.

Admiral Porter said it was the best review he had ever witnessed.

Our regiment being the largest in the division attracted the most attention. It was praised very much for its splendid appearance and marching which can't be beaten by any regiment in the Army of the Potomac.

Admiral Porter said, "That is a magnificent regiment. It marches splendidly. I've never seen the like of it."

Turning to Gen. Meade he enquired its name and was told "2nd Connecticut" and that it came from the same county as Gen. Sedgwick.

Meade said it was an honor to the army but we don't agree so long as we are not serving in the branch of the service for which we were organized.

Brigadier General Mackenzie has been assigned to the command of a division of cavalry in the Army of the James.

Brevet Brig. Gen. Hamlin has taken his place. He is a relative of the Vice Pres. Hamlin ex.

We are having a March day. The wind has kept the air filled with clouds of dust.

I have filled this sheet of fools cap with almost foolish writing.

Think I shall bid you all adieu.

Lewis

Letter #167

Before Petersburg, Va., March 23, 1865

Dear Sister Cornelia,

As you and Amelia have been so kind as to write me quite a long and interesting letter I will try and answer the best I can.

Last Monday our regiment was reviewed by Major Generals Meade, Hunt, Wright, and five other major generals and Admiral Porter U.S. Navy.

The day was the warmest of the season and very fine.

The division was reviewed near our present camp.

The 2nd Conn. was admired by all the generals and the admiral. It presented the best military appearance and marched the best. Admiral Porter said it was the best and cleanest looking regiment in the Army of the Potomac.

When it marched by the reviewing officers Admiral Porter said, "They march splendidly. I have never seen the like of it. It is a magnificent regiment."

Our company was not on review as that day we were under arms in camp, but we saw it.

There is unusual activity within the rebel lines just now. They keep on building strong works and mounting heavy guns.

My dinners are largely of one variety coffee, bread, or hard-tack and fresh beef.

Since I have been in the army I have drunk coffee all of the time.

I should like to eat some of your minute puddings very much. Sometimes I have to cook and eat my meals in less time than it takes to make a minute pudding.

I must close right off because Sergt. Hinsdale wants me to come to bed and I must go for I expect we will be on picket tomorrow night.

From your brother,

Lewis

Dear Sister Amelia,

I received your kind letter when Myron returned and I am very thankful for it. I hope you will find this as interesting.

Today has been very windy. Clouds of dust have filled the air so that it was almost impossible for anyone to be out. It blew down chimneys, tents, and even men off their horses.

The brush between our lines and the rebels caught fire so tonight we see a wall of fire instead of Johnnies.

The brush and leaves make a strong hot fire and the wind blows all the smoke over into the Johnnies lines. They get the benefit of all of it.

The rebels are not so good natured of late--they appear very shy.

There is not much news to write about as there is not much going on here, but we can't tell how soon something may turn up. that will startle the world.

I don't know of anything more that will be of interest.

Give my love to Uncle Fred and Aunt Maria and cousins.

Hoping you will write again soon, I remain

Your affectionate brother,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #168

Camp before Petersburg, Va.

March 28th, 1865

Dear Father,

Before this reaches you you will have heard of the fight of last Saturday at Fort Stedman.

It was about 3 A.M. Saturday morning that Charley Goodwin and I were awakened by heavy volleys on our right in front of the 9th Corps. We lay awake and listened to it.

In a short time the artillery opened then we knew something was going wrong.

In a few minutes we were called out and formed in line and so remained until after daylight when we went back.

Breakfast had just been finished when the order came to pack up everything except our tents. We hardly had time to do so before the order came to fall in.

Goodwin came up from the adjutants wearing his sword and said something serious had happened in the vicinity of Fort Sedgwick. He packed his knapsack and returned to the adjutant's.

Soon after we took the usual Sixth Corps quick step and off we went by army headquarters up toward the scene of action.

The action was then at its height but before we reached Meade's

Station it had died down so only now and then did we hear a gun.

While marching the rebels shelled us where they do the trains. One shell struck and burst about five rods from us. A fragment flew just in the rear of me taking away part of an overcoat and hitting one of the company on the arm and striking another in the side knocking him down but not hurting him.

The Rebs threw five more after we had passed. One killed an orderly's horse.

We marched about six miles from camp, halted and remained there until eleven. Then back came the entire division for only the 1st Division of the Sixth Corps was out.

The fight was all over so we put our best foot forward and went back to army headquarters.

Here Gen. Wheaton received orders which we fully understood by night.

Soon after we reached brigade headquarters the ball commenced at Fort Fisher. We marched part way down there, halted and rested for a short time then filed out in front of the works.

Then I knew what some of the boys had said was to be proved true--which was that if we ever fought on this line it would be in front of the works and not behind them.

It must have been about 4 P.M. when we loaded and formed in line. An order was issued for every man to keep his place and not fire until he could see the enemy.

Then came Col. Hubbard's order, "Forward, double quick" and away we went.

The rebel skirmishers threw down their arms and made for our rear. Some ran for their rear. These we found dead and wounded the next morning.

We halted in a hollow, reformed under a heavy artillery fire and then went on again up over brush, stumps and fallen trees. Now the enemy opened four or five batteries, one on our left flank which worried us more than all the others.

We gained another hollow in which we were somewhat sheltered from their fire. Here the men rested a few minutes. Then came orders from the colonel to form in line and retreat as fast as practical.

We retired over the next rise of ground into the hollow. Here we rallied and formed in line and advanced to the crest of the little hill and threw out pickets.

Here I was told that Goodwin had been carried from the field and had lived but a few minutes. I also learned that Adjutant Vaill had been wounded in the leg. He was helped off by Sergt. Spencer who tells me they reached the surgeon just after the stretcher bearers had brought Goodwin up. He saw him just as he breathed his last.

Sergt. Parmelee of Co. L. was but a few feet from him when he fell. Goodwin was on the left of the regiment. Parmelee said two balls flew past him. They were short ranged, evidently from a rebel sharpshooter.

Parmelee and Goodwin had gone but a few yards when Goodwin exclaimed, "I'm hit," placed his hand to his side, turned very pale and fell.

He called for Vaill and was told he had just been wounded.

What more he said I have not learned neither do I know who carried him from the field.

As soon as I heard he had been killed I made inquiries about his knapsack but found no one who knew anything about it. The next morning no trace of it could be found. Someone had appropriated it.

We put one hundred and ten men on picket and took Co. A for that.

I had left my knapsack back in camp but had on my overcoat and rubber blanket.

In the evening they sent us spades and we went to work and dug rifle pits. We were not allowed to build fires. It was very cold.

During the day we had kept warm by fast marching but that night we suffered very much indeed. The boys' teeth chattered. We did not care to stand up anymore than was necessary besides we were tired out. Never in my life have I suffered so much from the cold as I did that night. I shook like a leaf for the next two days.

About one o'clock the division drew off for camp. They did it so quietly that men who were fifty feet from them did not know they had left until morning.

We were told that the 2nd Division would relieve us in a short time but the long cold hours of the night passed slowly by, and no one came. When the gray cold morning finally came the boys were completely worn out. They could hardly keep awake although there were strict orders that every man should be alert.

The forenoon wore away slowly. Some of the boys slept while others walked about the field to see what they could find. I looked for Goodwin's knapsack but it was gone.

About two in the afternoon we were relieved and turned our faces toward camp.

The only brigade in the division that was engaged was ours. The 1st and Third Divisions were in the woods on our right. These the rebels did not shell.

We were out in an open field exposed to the most terrible fire I have ever seen with nothing to protect us from the bursting shells. We could see the rebel batteries--watch their smoke then jump behind a stump until the shell had exploded--then up and on.

The nearest we went to their works was about one thousand yards. If we had gone five hundred yards farther they would have opened on us with canister.

On the morning of Sunday the 26th we could see from our new position, the rebel works. Their position, so far as we could see, was a natural one. In some places they had two lines of works, one behind the other--in other places three lines.

There was battery after battery. Those in the rear flanked the sides of those in front. With the works well manned the largest army could not take them by storm. Deserters and prisoners have told us it is about the strongest place in their defenses.

Their works are on the side of a hill--one above the other. At the foot there is a stream about forty feet wide and eight or ten feet deep. This was impossible for infantry to cross.

We could see their men and their shanties scattered here and there, also horsemen galloping along their lines.

About 8 A.M. a body of troops came from their left down the line

halted in broad daylight, built fires and cooked or pretended. They then went down under a hill out of our sight. We thought perhaps they intended to retake their line but they did not molest us.

Corp. Horace N. Williams was struck by a ball which knocked out four of his front teeth and lodged under his ear.

When I reached camp all of the wounded had been sent to City Point, so I did not see any of them.

This morning Sergt. Wm. Smith went to City Point. He was hit in the foot by a minie ball which just cut the skin and tore off the sole of his shoe.

Monday afternoon Sergt. Hinsdale and I went to the division hospital to pack what things of Goodwin's we could find. We put them in the box containing his body. Sergt. Hinsdale and I did the packing ourselves.

There was his blouse, sword, watch, boots, gloves (covered with his own blood) overcoat, portfolio and gold pen.

Sergt. Spencer searched his pockets and took from them his pocket book, papers and letters. These are in possession of Dr. Plumb.

The body was embalmed under the direction of Dr. Plumb at the hospital. Yesterday Q.M. Sergt. Harrington and Sergt. Hinsdale took the corpse to City Point and had it expressed home. Sergt Hinsdale tells me he saw it on board the boat. The remainder of Goodwin's things we will send home as soon as possible.

The company have been to me and asked if they could pay the expenses. I told them I thought Mr. Osborn would feel that it belonged to him alone.

I gave Sergt. Hinsdale the funds, \$36, to pay the express. We have the express bill which we will send to Mr. Osborn today. This money Mr. O. can pay to you. Sergt Hinsdale will write him how it is arranged.

Of the tent squad you saw at Fort Worth there are now six left. They are Lieut. G.D. Stone, Sergt. Hinsdale, Myron, Ed Hempstead, Chas. Barber and myself.

I received a letter from Aunt Julia a few days ago also one from Uncle Erastus.

But I must close.

Gen. Sheridan arrived at Meade's headquarters yesterday-- left for the left in the afternoon.

Give my love to all,

Yours in haste,

Lewis

P.S. Enclosed are fifteen dollars national currency.

Letter #169

March 30, 1865

Dear Brother Phill,

I suppose all of you are looking anxiously for a letter and wondering why I don't write.

I'll write a few lines but I hardly know what to write.

Since I last wrote to you we have had another fight all along the line.

Last Friday night we went to bed as usual little dreaming what

would happen to one of our number or what we should have to pass through before the sun would set again.

It was about four in the morning of Saturday when we were awakened from our quiet slumber by (illegible). Charley, Goodwin and I listened. Finally an order came to fall in with arms, knapsacks, etc. This we did and remained in line a few minutes. Then we returned and got breakfast.

We had hardly finished when the order came to fall in immediately.

Goodwin with his sword came up from the adjutants. He put on his knapsack and returned saying there was serious work to be done, something was going wrong in the 9th Corps.

The brigade was soon on the march for division headquarters. Here we joined the 2nd and 3rd Brigades. Then we took the Sixth Corps quick step up the cordoroy for the scene of action.

Just after passing Meade's Station the rebels threw a shell which burst some fifty or sixty feet from us. One piece passed through the left of our company carrying away a part of an overcoat and hitting a man on the arm and struck another in the side knocking him down. None of the boys were hurt. After we had passed they threw two or three more. One killed the horse of an orderly.

We marched up into the vicinity of Fort Sedgwick, halted and remained from 9 until 11. Then back we went as fast as we came.

At brigade headquarters we halted. It was then 1 P.M. We remained here until two.

During this time I saw Goodwin and talked with him about the result of the morning's fight and the feat of the enemy. Goodwin said, "If they don't succeed hereafter better than they did this morning, this war will come to an end before long." "Then, Lewis, we will return home and hear no more cannon except heaven's artillery." "It seems impossible that they can gain their independence by fighting unless they gain more victories than of late."

Shortly afterward we moved about a half mile farther down into therear of a small fort. Here we talked for a short time and it was here I last saw him alive. Neither one of us thought we would have any fighting to do that day after marching twelve miles.

At about this time the batteries in the vicinity of Fort Fisher commenced firing. For a few minutes shot and shell went screeching through the air. To think of going in reach of them made ones blood curdle.

I don't remember what conversation passed between us.

Soon the order came to move and on we went. The regiment marched left in front. Goodwin's place was on the left of the regiment. Co. A was on the right wing.

We halted under the cover of some woods and loaded. Then we knew what was before us. The regiment moved a short distance. The left wing was in an open field, the right under cover of the woods.

Col. Hubbard sat on his horse and told the men to keep as good a line as possible.

Then came the order, "Forward double quick" and away we went. The rebel picket line opened on us feebly. As we approached their rifle pits they flung down their arms and gave themselves up.

Just about this time the rebel artillery opened on us. They threw their shells very close.

We went forward as fast as possible to keep inside of their range where there was less danger of bursting shells.

We went through a little hollow up through some stumps and brush to the crest of a little hill, down that into another hollow. Here the men were completely exhausted.

The rebels now opened three batteries in front and one on our left flank.

We retreated to the crest of the hill. Here we lay down. The Rebs still kept on shelling. All but one shell went over us and burst in our rear. One burst in front of our regiment and a piece struck a stump in front of me.

After dark I learned that Theodore had been wounded and that Goodwin had been carried from the field in a dying condition. It was thought he did not live to reach the breastworks.

Fortyfive from our regiment were sent out on picket. Spades for seventy-five were sent out and more men from the regiment were sent to dig rifle pits. This took Co. A until about one o'clock when we finished.

They told us we would be relieved by the 2nd Division.

The morning had been quite warm and fast marching had made us sweaty. When we laid down we felt the effects of the cold chilly night. We were not allowed to build fires nor make any noise. I had on my overcoat and rubber blanket. The wind blew very strong from the northwest. I have never suffered more from the cold in my life than I did that night.

Every moment we expected to be relieved.

About half past two the division drew off and returned to camp leaving us on picket.

Slowly the long cold hours of the night wore away and still no relief came. The boys were completely worn out. There were strict orders for everyone to keep awake and it was almost impossible to sleep.

Morning finally came and we were still on picket.

We cooked our breakfast. I tried to get away and go to the hospital but could not. I wanted to see Theodore and Corp. Williams but as military law is despotic, I had to remain, much against my will.

About 2 P.M. the long looked for relief came.

We put on our things and had gone a few yards when the Rebs threw a shell which burst about sixty feet over our heads. Expecting they would throw more we dug out for camp.

Upon reaching camp we learned that all of the wounded in the hospital had been sent to City Point so I did not see any of our men.

In the afternoon Sergt. Hinsdale and I went over to the division hospital to pack Goodwin's effects in the box containing his body.

I don't know at what time in the afternoon he fell or what were his dying words. I would have run the risk of life and limb gladly to have been with him just then.

Capt. Deane one of Gen. Hamlin's aides saved Goodwin's sword and watch.

Sergt. Hinsdale went to City Point with the body and saw that everything was right and then returned. I gave him the money to pay the expressage.

The embalming was done under the eye of Dr. Plumb of our regiment.

The ball which took his life was smaller than the usual minie. It was fired at short range and by a sharpshooter. It hit his left elbow when it was raised, hit his watch which was in his vest pocket, passed through his body and came out under the right nipple.

Sergt. Parmelee was a few feet from Goodwin when he fell. The sergeant remembers hearing the ball hit Goodwin. He turned white, put his hand to his breast, exclaimed, "I'm hit" and fell.

He called for the adjutant but was told he had been wounded. He then said he could live but a few minutes and begged them not to risk their lives as they could not save his.

Our picket line is now more than half way between their works and ours.

I see that the New York Herald correspondent makes out their picket line to be their first line of works but this is a little mistake.

If their main lines were not stronger than their picket lines we would soon drive them away.

Thursday--

All day yesterday troops were moving down to the left. Sheridan's cavalry went day before yesterday. All of the troops in our rear have been sent away so there is only the 6th Corps.

Last night Co. A was on guard. My relief had just come off, at 1 A.M. when all at once a volley of musketry and heavy guns was heard in front of the 1st Corps.

In less than a minute the long roll was beaten, the bugles sounded, boots and saddles and all of the camp was a bustle. The regiments fell in behind the works and very quietly awaited for the Rebs to open the ball but they did not deem it wise to do so in this immediate vicinity.

We could see shells burst over the works in front of the 9th Corps and along the Appomattox. Some of the guns near us we could hear but most of them were beyond hearing distance. The flash could be seen very plainly lighting up the sky just as lightning does in the summer time.

We could see the mortar shells rise high in the air as they described a circle descending faster and faster until a bright flash and they were gone.

We have not learned what it was about.

All day heavy and rapid firing has been heard from the left. Our forces have been fighting all day. Cannonading and volleys of musketry are heard distinctly. As night is coming on the firing is working to the north which shows that the Rebs have fallen back.

But I must bid you all an affectionate farewell trusting all to the God of Battles and hoping this bloody, cruel war will be brought to a speedy end.

Give my love to father, mother, brothers, sisters and grandparents.

I remain with much love your affectionate brother,
Lewis Bissell

P.S. Please tell Mr. Myron Osborn that if there is anything I can do for them to write me. I will help them all I can. Give them my love.

I did not see Corp. Williams after he was wounded, therefore, I don't know how dangerously he was hurt.

Yesterday I sent a letter to father, containing \$15.00.

I have been suffering from a weak back since last Saturday. In the charge someone hit me a blow in the small of my back with a musket. It does not feel just right but I shall soon recover.

A Reb deserter came in last night. Says the C.S.A. has proved a failure.

Letter #170

Before and Behind Petersburg
Sunday, April 2, 1865

Dear Father,

While I am writing our men are driving the enemy before them. You will wonder where I am and what I am doing just now. Well, Co. A and a part of Co. F are on guard so once more we are lucky.

The 6th Corps went to bed as usual little dreaming that the rising of tomorrow sun would see them drawn up in battle array and driving everything before them.

But I will commence at the beginning and tell about it as correctly as I can at this time, noon.

At ten o'clock at night of Saturday, April 1, we were awakened from our slumber by the discharge of a signal gun at Fort Wadsworth.

In a few minutes the batteries on each side opened on the rebel picket line in our front. A few minutes later the entire line from Fort Fisher up to the extreme right commenced a furious bombardment of the enemy's works. It was the most terrific I have ever heard. It made the very ground under us tremble.

The regiment was ordered to fall in. This they did and then went back and packed their knapsacks and put them in a tent--one tent for each company. They then fell in with haversacks and canteens. Quite a number of axes were issued.

The men took arms and marched toward brigade headquarters.

Soon afterwards I learned that Gen. Grant was massing his troops in the vicinity of Fort Fisher. The 6th Corps was to form the right wing of the charging column.

About 11 P.M. the rebel pickets charged on our pickets three times but each time were repulsed with some little loss to them.

The cannonading continued to increase. Shot and shell were flying over the devoted city of rebeldom. Volleys of musketry in rapid succession mingled with the artillery.

In the vicinity of Fort Fisher little disturbance was made. Our men crept close to the rebel pickets and were on the point of charging when they rose up, gave our men one volley and left for their next line of works. Here our men met with little resistance and over they went.

The rebels, from their next line of works, opened on them with artillery. A charge of spherical case burst over our boys' heads wounding Lieut. Col. Skinner. A few men were wounded while pulling down the abatis.

The enemy made little resistance at the second and third line of works. Our brigade took three forts. Our regiment manned the

guns and turned them on the rebels with terrible effect, driving them in confusion from their works. Some gave themselves up as prisoners of war while others took to their heels and as usual showed their expertness in traveling for their city of refuge.

At sunrise the atmosphere was filled with sulphurous smoke.

We were deployed behind the works to repel any attack that might be made in the absence of our troops.

All the while the cannonading continued unabated mingled with heavy volleys of musketry from the 9th Corps. Shells were yelling with the fierceness of demons let loose from the infernal regions.

As the day advances the firing grows heavier. It is increasing in front of the 6th Corps and now and then bursting out in front of the 9th Corps. The batteries in our front begin to wax warm.

Large columns of smoke are rising from the rebel camps which plainly shows that the Rebs have left. As the firing is receding, it is safe to say that our men are driving the enemy before them.

Early in the morning we could hear very heavy firing in the rear of the rebel lines in our front. This is supposed to be Phill Sheridan and his cavalry.

Our regiment has been heard from on the Southside R.R. They will hold it.

11 A.M.--

The news continues very good. The roar of artillery still continues to shake the ground on which we stand.

A large column of smoke is rising from the vicinity of the doomed city which suggests evacuation at an early hour this afternoon, that is, if Sheridan will permit, who as report has it is about to dispute the passage not of the Splngen but of the Appomattox.

Sergt. C.W. Hinsdale has just been out to the picket line and reports our men driving the enemy toward Petersburg. Our men advance in two columns with artillery following. The rebels have left their baggage behind for our men to look after.

As the rebel line of battle falls back the artillery follows then wheels into position, fires a few rounds, then up and off again, just as they did in the Valley last summer.

The rebel picket line in front of us is still there and they are quietly watching our pickets.

Our brigade has just passed by here on the way to the 9th Corps as support for them. We have troops enough on the west side of the city at present.

All is very quiet in our immediate front. In front of Fort Fisher there is heavy firing.

One report is that the 24th Corps will make a charge on the fort holding the Lynchburg and Danville R.R. Beyond a doubt the Southside Road is ours.

Our brigade captured three forts. Our regiment turned the captured guns on the rebels doing terrible execution among them. Some of the boys in other regiments in the brigade said they never saw artillery used with such terrible effect. The ground was found strewn with their dead and wounded.

Our boys have taken one gun out and are running it up by hand and will open on them.

About 10 A.M. large fires were seen in the vicinity of Petersburg.

The troops fighting the rebels on the Southside R.R. are the 24th, 25th, 6th and 2nd Corps. Our corps is on the right. They have advanced and are moving up the railroad toward the city.

The 9th Corps has taken three forts in front of Fort Hell.
2 P.M.--

The firing is not so rapid. Artillery is heard now and then. The infantry is out of hearing. We have captured a large number of prisoners. Some of them are old men. A few slave soldiers have been taken.

Our regiment burnt Gen. Hill's headquarters before sunrise. I have seen a few contrabands going down the road with their bundles on their heads and little darkies in arms.

About one hundred and thirty prisoners have just passed by.

Since noon our corps has taken three forts. Three more prevent them from marching into Petersburg. These the 2nd Division is to change soon.

The mail closes immediately, so I must say farewell.

Give my love to all the family and friends.

From your affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #171

Wednesday Afternoon, April 5, 1865

Dear Lewis:

I seat myself this afternoon to write a few lines to you. I think it has been a long time since I wrote you but you must not feel neglected if I do not write oftener.

I find but little time to write. When your Pa writes he hands me the letter now and then to read to see if there is anything I wish him to write.

Amid all the glorious news, as the papers call it, of the success of our armies and the fast closing of the war, what notes of sadness do we hear on all sides of us.

It came so near last week in the death of Goodwin.

Hearing from you of the hardships and sufferings that you and other of your brave comrades endured at the time, fills our hearts with greatest grief and anxiety. We long to hear the news of the day yet dread what it may be. All we can do is hope and pray for the best.

We called at Mr. Osborn's as we went to church and looked at Goodwin as he lay in his coffin. It was the most natural looking corpse I have ever seen that has been sent home to be buried.

Mr. Osborn said it was a great comfort to him to have it sent as soon after he died. In speaking of the great affliction, it was to them said they also had a great deal to comfort them for they felt that Goodwin was a truly pious man and had died a sincere Christian.

He spoke of his enlisting. Said at the time he felt as if he could not have him go but when he learned a few months after of his happy conversion and his entire resignation to God's will, whatever it might be, and his pleasure in being able to serve his country he felt as if the hand of God was in it all and as if that was the

way God had marked out for him. If he fell in his country's service he must submit without repining.

He said he hoped you would not come home to us in that way but if you did that we might have hope in your death.

Must all these solemn warnings be lost on you? Why will you not as Goodwin did, on your bended knees cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and give your heart to God at once (if you have not already done so). Christ is just as near to you on the battlefield as in your own quiet home and is ever ready to hear the cry of the humble penitent believing one.

Go to him as to an earthly parent. Ask him to take you just as you are and make you what he would have you to be.

If religion is needful to die by it is also to live by. The comforts and enjoyments it will bring you in your trying situation are more than I can convey to you in words.

It seems as if nearly all of your best friends and comrades are gone from you but there is one Friend who will never leave you nor forsake you. Go to him in sincerity and pray for forgiveness and acceptance and surely you will be received.

If there is anything we can do for you or anything we can send you write and let us know.

Theodore and Mr. Williams are both in Washington and both have written home.

Uncle Frederick and family left for home last week Tuesday. Have not heard from them since. Their oldest girl, Sarah, was unwell all of the time they were here and they could not enjoy their visit as they wished to.

Aunt Maria had intended to stay until June but as Sarah did not recover thought it best to get home as soon as they could.

It really seemed good to see them once more. They look and appear much healthier than they did when they left here but are not very strong.

Charley has been somewhat sick with a sore throat, so much so that he had a doctor two or three times. But he is getting better and is around again. Was in here this evening.

I think it must have been catching for Fred had it first, then Sarah and since they left, Charley. Now it is going through our family. Amelia and Frank are well of it. Now Sam, Alice, and Nelie are down with it and tonight Phill has gone to bed with a dish of herb tea. Says he is sick.

We have relieved them all so far with salt pork on the throat and gold thread tea with a little physic. Have not had a doctor.

Spring is quite early here this year. The frost is all out of the ground, the grass looks green in the warm corners, the birds sing quite merrily--robins are hopping around, the frogs are quite musical at night and everything indicates an early spring.

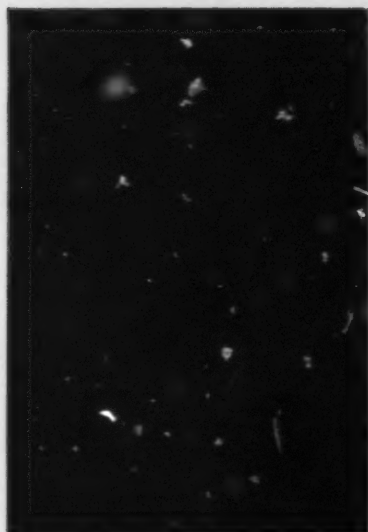
If war and fighting would only cease, what joy and gladness would the return of spring bring. It does seem now as if it was soon to stop.

We must have patience and go forward in the path of duty trusting in God and all will be right.

I thought when I commenced this I should write only a few lines but kept on scribbling and finally filled the paper.

Again I commend you to the care of the Heavenly Father and subscribe myself.

Your affectionate mother,
Clarissa Bissell



Henry Benton Bissell



Clarissa Wright Bissell

CHAPTER 9

Appomattox and After
(April 10, 1865-July 8, 1865)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the Confederates evacuated Petersburg, Richmond had to be abandoned and the Davis government, in the first of many sudden moves, fled to Darville. Lee, hotly pursued, retreated west to Amelia Court House. The final major engagement between Grant and Lee's army occurred at Sayler's Creek on April 6. By the 9th, Lee realized he was trapped and surrendered his army at Appomattox Court House (Clover Hill).

The surrender of Lee's army in a practical sense did end the war though Johnston's surrender was not formally accepted until April 26 and Davis eluded the Federals into May. Litchfield's Kirby Smith surrendered May 26, but these final capitulations were not to be witnessed by Lincoln. The rejoicing over Appomattox had scarcely begun in the North when the nation was shocked over President Lincoln's assassination on April 14. His assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was pursued and killed April 26 in Virginia.

For the hundreds of thousands of men in the Union armies, the end of the war meant a discharge and a trip home. The Grand Review of the Army of the Potomac occurred in Washington on May 23, but without the VI Corps. They had their own review June 8. The day Lewis Bissell received his discharge, July 7, four of the Lincoln assassination conspirators were hanged in Washington.

THE LETTERS

Lewis Bissell. In his last battle, Lewis had an unusual experience with a wounded Confederate. Does he grant the wounded soldier's request? How intense is the joy of victory for Bissell and his comrades? Do you anticipate a letdown? What type of mixed feelings might the soldiers have about the ending of the war?

In his last letters, Bissell threatens an action that may surprise you. What changes have occurred in him and the army that allow him to consider such an action?

In Lewis Bissell's opinion, what was the cause of the Civil War? Also, what reasons do you feel Bissell would give to explain why the North won the war? How much importance would you place in Bissell's opinions and why?

A war as long and as costly in lives as the Civil War, was bound to deeply affect the population. Was Bissell able to embrace Lincoln's famous words, "with malice toward none; with charity for all"?

Bissell travels through large areas of Virginia after Lee's surrender and observes the results of total war and the abolition of slavery. How does he feel about the condition of the South and her people? He has strong opinions regarding the freed slaves. How accurate is his assessment of their condition? As Bissell contemplates the condition of the South, he makes clear his opinions of work, government, and capitalism. How many Americans of this time shared his viewpoints? How would these views be applied during Reconstruction?

Finally, assess the experience of war on Lewis Bissell and other individuals in the letters.

Northern Society. How powerful an impact did Lincoln's assassination have on Northern society? Why was Lincoln revered by so many Northerners? Can you make a comparison of the grief and ways of demonstrating it between Kennedy's and Lincoln's death? What other similarities are there in these two tragic events separated by less than 100 years? The loss of a popular public figure by assassination, murder, or other tragic causes, usually brings about a search for the meaning or reason for the death. Undoubtedly, you have had this experience, perhaps with the John Lennon slaying. How have you reconciled the death? How did Henry Bissell reconcile himself to Lincoln's death?

Assess the experience of war on Northern and Southern society. Realize that a relatively high percentage of Americans fought in the Civil War. In fact, 50% of the eligible males of Connecticut (men between the ages of 18 and 40) served in the Union army.

Readjustment to peacetime can be a difficult assignment for a society emerging from a trying war. What evidence do you see of the North and South resuming peacetime pursuits?

The Army. The regiment's performance in the war was commendable. It marched over 1000 miles and fought bravely in crucial battles. The delay in issuing the regiment's discharge brings about a severe reaction among the men. Is the hostility due only to the delay, or is it based on other incidents and feelings that had been building for years?

The army, with its commitment to total war, can be seen as the harbinger of a new era and a new order in America. In what ways did the army bring about change and in what ways was it symbolic of changes that had already occurred?

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

One way to get a view of post-war America is to follow the career of an individual, such as Grant, Lee, Mackenzie, Upton, Hancock, Early, Davis, Custer, Longstreet, Mahone, Sherman or Sheridan after the fighting ended. Or, students may wish to

explore the fate of a group, such as Freedmen, veterans, laborers, etc. Whatever is studied, the question of how the war changed their lives and America must be addressed.

The Lincoln assassination is also a suitable topic for further research. Students may wish to explore the Eisenshiml thesis and compare the "conspiracy" to the Kennedy assassination. In what ways was the public reaction similar in each case?

LITERATURE COURSE

Text: A Hazard of New Fortunes by William Dean Howells

Published in 1890, this novel is not about war. Instead, it is about America as it appeared a quarter century later; yet, the effects of the Civil War can be distinctly observed. Like The Red Badge of Courage, A Hazard of New Fortunes is a work of American Realism, and both are attempts at truthful portrayals of ordinary facets of life. Both authors are also social critics, writing commentaries upon society, government, and economics, and both works embody a conception of man overwhelmed by circumstance and environment. What features do the three novels of the 1880's and 1890's studied in this course have in common? You should note attitudes to society, to God and religion, to the basic nature of man and the possibility of free will. Are characters helpless (or relatively so) in the face of economic and social forces? What kind of control does Hank Morgan attempt to exercise over his life? How do things go wrong? Is Maggie in any way responsible for her death, or is it society, her environment, that has judged and condemned her? In these questions, keep in mind how Darwinian theory might have affected men's ideas. Environment may be seen as the principal cause of change, and those that are the strongest are those that survive. Examine the theories of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner concerning what was termed 'Social Darwinism'. Here is a quotation of Sumner's:

"The rich are a product of natural selection...It is because they are thus selected that wealth--both their own and that entrusted to them--aggregates under their hands...They may fairly be regarded as the naturally selected agents of society for certain work. They get high wages and live in luxury, but the bargain is a good one for society."

Would Crane's Maggie agree with this? How would Dryfoos and Lindau in A Hazard of New Fortunes react to that statement?

Two events of enormous importance occurred in nineteenth century America within the brief span of five years. The first was the publication of Darwin's theories in 1859; the second the victory of the dynamic, rapidly industrializing North over the agrarian, slaveholding society of the South. In both cases, change and a form of progress was established as a pattern for American life. The victory of the North might be construed as a social vindication of evolutionary theory.

Yet, the problem of the poor and exploited remained, aggravated by progressive industrialization and the consequent rapid expansion of urban areas. Both Crane and Howells were acutely conscious of those who could not survive so well as Sumner's millionaires, and these writers' sympathies for the working classes are obvious. Yet Howells is also able to observe the pernicious effects of this system upon the rich. Observe and note passages in which the rich industrialist, Dryfoos, is seen to suffer because of his material success. His wealth does not prevent self-torment.

This novel is also interesting for the wide varieties of American types and characters portrayed. There are the Marches, decent and sensitive individuals shut up in middle class refinement. There are Dryfoos and Lindau, the former, a nouveau riche industrialist, the latter, an immigrant German socialist who had fought with the Union forces in the Civil War; there are the Woodbuns, representatives of the decayed aristocratic South, who are forced to adapt to economic necessity in the bustling city of New York.

Above all, there is the setting of the novel, an American city in the late 1880's. It is alive, active, and dynamic. The different classes live their different lives, and there is the constant background tension of strikes, riots, and perhaps, revolution. This novel is a dramatization of the class tensions extant at the time, and you, the reader, will be asked to consider two questions: firstly, what is meant by the terms capitalism and socialism, and secondly, on the basis of what you can discern as the writer's sympathies in this book, was William Dean Howells a socialist?

The latter question may not be easy to answer, as Howells employs a complex narrative technique. How many different narrators or points of view are there in the novel? You should notice very early on that you enter the thoughts and observations of several different characters. Does Howells do this so that we might contrast revolutionary with reactionary, working class with middle class? And what are the thoughts and feelings of those whose sympathies are divided, forced into crises of conscience? Identify those individuals and explain fully the nature of their conflicts.

Your final written assignment is to produce a long paper on the nature of literary Realism and Naturalism as mentioned in the introduction to the curriculum. Refer specifically to Crane, Howells, and Twain, and compare and contrast Realism with the Romantic mode of fiction. Library research will be required, as will a full bibliography and footnotes.

Points to note:

1. How might the increasing industrialization of America have had an effect on literature?
2. What might the role of the theory of evolution have been in the development of Realism?
3. Do you think that the Civil War might have played a part in this development, even if only symbolically?



Federal Troops Drawn to View a Hanging

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Chapter 9

Appomattox and After
(April 10, 1865-July 8, 1865)

Letter #172

Clover Hill, Va., April 10, 1865

Dear Father,

I wish you could have been here yesterday afternoon. Such times you never saw and I never expect to see again.

Gen. Lee has surrendered unconditionally to Grant.

We will come marching home soon I hope, but we must have a little patience.

I have not learned the particulars of Lee's surrender nor do I care so long as I know it to be a fact.

Yesterday morning our cavalry advance commenced skirmishing with his rear. Now and then artillery was brought into play. The 2nd Corps was in advance.

We marched through the village of New Store. Just the other side of it we found deserted wagons and three abandoned caissons. In their flight they did not have time to burn the powder or do any damage.

About ten we halted just in the rear of the 2nd Corps who were moving out into the woods. We cooked coffee and rested until about eleven, when we started after them. The 6th and 2nd Corps were on the same road. We marched rather slowly for the 6th Corps. Halted once an hour to rest.

The cavalry and the 2nd Corps kept up a brisk skirmish. About 3 P.M. it died away.

We soon halted and had orders to cook coffee. I had got mine down when we observed a rebel ambulance with a white flag going down to the rear. In it were one or two rebel officers who seemed to be wounded. At the time we supposed they were going through our lines.

In about a half an hour Gen. Hamlin came riding back, hat off and his horse on the full jump. He told the boys Lee was about to surrender.

There was some cheering you had better believe.

In about another half hour Gen. Getty came riding back and told the boys that Gen. Wright was in possession of Lee's sword and that he had surrendered the entire army to Grant.

The old Sixth Corps made the woods of old Virginia echo with cheer after cheer.

Presently a cavalcade of generals with Meade at their head came riding down the road. The air seemed filled to overflowing with cheers. The generals cheered and the boys did their best.

Some of the batteries wheeled into position and fired a national salute. At each discharge the boys would cheer.

They were so happy they did not know what to do with themselves. They forgot that they had marched twelve miles that day. Drums were

beaten, flags waved and cannon roared all in wild confusion.

The boys all wanted to see Gen. Lee but neither he nor his army were to be seen.

Yesterday afternoon it was reported that Lee had surrendered his sword to Gen. Wright as it was he who first broke his center at Petersburg which caused the downfall of his defense and delivered his entire army into our hands.

I presume long before this reaches you you will have heard of our fight of the 6th. I don't know what they will call it. We did not stay long enough to learn the name of the place.

The 2nd Brigade has the credit of capturing four thousand prisoners, the rebel Generals Ewell and Hershaw and the young rebel Gen. Lee, Jr.

For two miles the road was filled with broken muskets. We could hardly move without stepping on them. The major of the 65th N.Y. was mortally wounded by a musket exploding as it lay in the road. One man had his foot shot off by a horse stepping on a musket.

Our regiment had seven wounded.

Gen. Wheaton said of the fight, that the Second Heavies after they are formed in line don't look back for a good place to retreat to but look for a good place to shelter themselves or for a weak place in the rebel line. Gen. Hamlin says, "Once get them on the charge they will dodge around, crawl along, rally them, give a yell and a volley and over the works like so many blood hounds, each on the track of a rebel."

Our brigade lost a good many killed and wounded. The rebel loss was about the same.

I could have picked up some nice rebel swords but I had no way to carry them. Had all I could do to carry my own things.

In the road I saw one rebel general and several field officers dead.

One of Lee's personal staff lay with one of his legs shot off just above the knee. He begged me to kill him.

We burnt quite a number of wagons.

Gen. Custer rode along with over thirty battle flags that he had captured the night before.

You will gather much more correct information from the papers than I can write although I was there.

I send this in a rebel envelope with some papers and a letter I picked up at Farmville.

The boys of Co. A are very tired but feel happy.

I will at some other time write you more fully.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

Letter #173

Burkeville, Virginia, April 13, 1865

Dear Father,

I presume you will wonder why you don't get any mail from me. Well, if you were here you would know the reason why. Gen. Grant does not stop for mail when he is following Gen. Lee. The mail remains behind while the army goes ahead.

I am writing from camp about two miles from Burkeville.

The Sixth Corps is marching back to City Point. We expect to

remain here two or three days and rest some before starting.

We have not seen a paper or letters since the 31st of March, therefore, we know nothing of what is going on outside of our division.

We commenced our homeward march Tuesday morning. That day we marched twenty-one miles through mud and brush. Wednesday we marched through Farmville and halted about two miles from Rice's Station. Thursday we reached our present camp.

We are drawing shoes so I think we will march back to City Point.

The cars are running on a part of the road. The sick and wounded are being taken back as fast as possible.

This march has been the most tiresome of any I have been through. However, the men stand the marching much better than I expected. Some of the time we have been short of rations.

We have fought the last battle of the Army of the Potomac. The name of the fight is "Sailor's Creek" I believe. Our brigade captured four thousand prisoners including Generals Ewell and Hershaw and Lee, Jr.

The rebel troops we fought were the marine brigade of Capt. Simms. They fought desperately but our troops were too much for them.

We expect to be home in about a month perhaps before that. Anyhow our fighting is over and we feel very much relieved.

The regiment lost seven men wounded, one mortally--none from our company.

I saw Gen. Grant the day before Lee surrendered and Gen. Meade the day of the surrender. It was a joyful time, I tell you. None could feel more joyful than the soldiers as they are most interested. It is not pleasant to run the risk of battle.

John Bishop stands the marching well. Hinsdale was a little unwell but stands things very well now. Myron has the adjutant's horse to ride and so takes it very easy. He carries my blanket for me so I get along very well. Lieut. G.D. Stone has been in command of our company in the absence of Lieut. Monson who has just returned from a furlough.

The regiment was very fortunate during the fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee. We have been where the bullets flew thick and fast but we have been spared. When I look back at what I have been through it seems miraculous that I have come out alive.

It is after sundown and I must close or darkness will compel me to.

The next time I write it will be from City Point I hope.

Give my love to all. Remember me to Mr. Osborn.

I expect we will get a mail today the first for some time.

I am well but tired.

I remain very affectionately your son,

Lewis

Letter #174

This was an entry in Bissell's Diary

The Surrender of Lee's Army to General Grant

Sunday morning when we awoke after five hours sleep we little thought that before the setting of the sun we would know that the rebel Gen. Lee had surrendered his army, but such is the fact.

We left camp at New Store, Buckingham County, just before

sunrise. Marched until about 10 A.M. when we halted just in the rear of the 2nd Corps who were moving out.

During our advance we could hear our artillery and skirmishers at work on Lee's rear. Every little way we came across abandoned wagons, dead mules, deserted limbers and ammunition.

We cooked coffee and rested until about 12 N. Then we started on and rested once every hour.

About half past two we came to a halt and were ordered to cook coffee. While cooking our coffee we saw a rebel ambulance with a flag of truce going out toward the rebel lines. It contained some of our officers and two or three rebel officers.

We forgot all about it until Brig. Gen. Hamlin came riding back as fast as his horse could carry him. His hat was gone and blood was running down his cheek from scratches. He told the brigade that Lee was about to surrender to Gen. Grant.

The joy of the boys knew no bounds, they gave cheer after cheer, yell after yell. Their feelings can be better imagined than described.

Soon back came Gen. Getty bringing the news that Lee had surrendered his sword to Gen. Wright and his army to Grant.

The entire corps broke out into cheers. Cheer after cheer rang through the air. The woods of old Virginia rang with the shouts of the "Bully Boys in Blue."

In a few moments two or three batteries fired a salute. After every discharge the boys would cheer.

While this was going on Major Generals, Meade, Getty, Ricketts, and Wheaton rode along the line. The boys cheered them long and loud, flags waved, drums rolled, bands played and hats flew up in the air. Pen cannot describe or brush paint the scene.

Lee had surrendered his army to Grant. There was no disputing that now this cruel war was at an end.

How thankful the nation ought to be.

The Sixth Corps fought the last battle of the Army of the Potomac on Wednesday last.

We did not see Gen. Grant. I presume he was busy with Lee, who had surrendered unconditionally. His army was between thirty and fifty thousand men.

As yet we have not learned the particulars but are willing to wait.

We shall have occasion to remember the second and ninth of April. The latter is the most joyful and happy day I have had in my life. At last we can sing, "Now this cruel war is over."

What is to be done with Lee's army? I don't know or care very much.

Beyond a doubt slavery has played out.

But I must say goodbye until I come home which I have reason to think will not be far distant.

I remain very affectionately,

Yours truly,

Lewis Bissell

Letter #175

Litchfield April 16, 1865

Dear Lewis,

I commence my letter to you by stating that yours of April 2

written during the attack on Petersburg was duly received.

We have been anxiously looking for another letter from you for some days but no soldier's letters have been received in Litchfield or Bantam office since the evacuation of Petersburg.

We learned by the papers that the 6th Corps was in hot pursuit of Gen. Lee's army, and that the 1st and 3rd Divisions were in the last battle near Burkesville just before he surrendered.

We have been looking on our map for such places as Burkesville, Farmville, Sailor's Creek, Amelia C. House thinking perhaps that is where you may be. But it is all conjecture; nothing definite is known about the 2nd Conn. H.A. and so we are waiting in suspense hoping and praying for the best; that God would care for and protect you amid hardships and dangers.

We have much of sadness mixed with the joyous news of late. Yesterday (Saturday) we heard of the death of Pres. Lincoln by the ball of an assassin.

When the news came to Litchfield the Hon. Geo. C. Woodruff said he could not and would not believe it; Pres. Lincoln never attended the theatre. But the sad reality came with convincing power.

Our most noble president was shot in the theatre on evening of Friday the 14th inst. and died the next morning. Seward and his two sons were wounded by the dagger of the assassin.

It seems that a play was got up expressly to divert the president and some others who were advertised to be present. But the sad particulars will reach you before this letter does.

It makes my heart sick to think of this event and were it not that God rules above and directs every event of life I could not be reconciled to this terrible reality.

We have been to church today. It was draped in mourning. Crepe was hung in front of the galleries and festooned over and in front of the pulpit. Sadness was on every countenance. Some of the houses were draped in mourning. I noticed Mr. Garwood Sanfords on West Street.

The Rev. Mr. Parmelee read the 46th Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble." The hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," was sung. The prayers expressed much of humiliation and a hope that we might trust in God in all these trying circumstances, also fervent petitions for the president's afflicted family and that his death might be sanctified to the nation.

The text was Psalm 75:6. "For promotion cometh not from the east nor from the west nor from the south," "But God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another."

Rev. Mr. Richards commenced his sermon by saying that we had had three presidents die while in office. Wm. C. Harrison signalized himself on the western frontier in a war with the Indians. Afterwards became president and died of the 4th of April being president just one short month. Zachary Taylor also of Va., famous in the Mexican War of being elected president, then died of cholera after being in office sixteen months.

These are two. The third is our own deeply lamented Lincoln.

He was born in Kentucky in 1809. At the age of seven years he went to school carrying an old spelling book being one of the three books that composed his father's library.

The next we hear of him is in a book with his father's family

on their way to Indiana where at the age of nineteen he helped his father surround his little farm with a rail fence.

In 1830 the family moved to Ill. He was now twenty-one. Soon after he became a clerk in a store. After that he was chosen a captain in the Black Hawk War. After a little time he studied law and commenced to practice.

His practice was chiefly in Springfield which was his residence at the time of his election to the presidency four years since.

Mr. Richards said that foreign nations would undoubtedly taunt us with the insecurity of our Republic but they may well look at home.

Henry the 4th of France was stabbed while riding in his carriage and the reeking knife was held up to view in the capital of his kingdom.

William of Nassau a German prince and greatly beloved founder of the Dutch Republic also suffered a violent death.

Mr. R. spoke of seeing in the museum of a German city the blood stained garments of this noble ruler.

If you read history you will find many such instances.

Lincoln is the first magistrate in this country who has died a violent death. Rev. Mr. Vaill said we never before had such a Sunday as today. Gloom and grief is spread over the whole nation.

Pres. Lincoln was a self-made man. He was far from being aspiring, yet his worth and nobleness of mind was always appreciated. The honesty and integrity of his heart shows in his private and public life. It was well that he was called, "Honest Old Abe."

That one sentence, now he has passed away is a most fitting eulogy. Could anything be said more proper and appropriate? Would that as much could be said for all our public men.

The first time he was elected he had 1,860,000 votes. The second time he had 2,200,000 votes. So you can see how greatly he grew in favor with the American people.

His friends placed the unbounded confidence in him.

It is said he was not rich. Sometime since I saw a drawing of his house in Ill. It was plain and substantial--nothing more.

His kindness in heart to the soldiers was great. Those in the hospitals were not beneath his notice. But he has passed away as no other president ever did before.

On the historic page in future years the names of three presidents will shine with undimmed lustre. These will be Washington, Jackson (not Stonewall) and Lincoln. Washington is the Father. Jackson the Preserver and Lincoln the Restorer of his country.

But you will hardly thank me for writing so much at this time.

By the telegraph, Saturday, we learn that Johnson took the oath of office that day.

Andrew Johnson the new president was born in Raleigh, N.C. on the 29th of Dec. 1808. Is now 56 years old. He was apprenticed to a tailor and worked at that trade until he was 17 years old.

He never attended school but obtained a good common education by studying, after his marriage, under the direction of his wife.

Having removed to Greenville, Tennessee he was elected mayor of that place in 1830. Was elected to the state legislature in 1835, to the state senate in 1841. In 1843 he became a representative in Congress serving until 1853.

During 1853 he was elected governor of Tennessee and reelected in 1855. In 1857 he was elected United States Senator for the time ending in 1863 and at once became conspicuous for his cold sense and sterling integrity.

Johnson has been provisional or military governor of Tennessee since its restoration to the Union.

In his early life he was a pro-slavery man but on the breaking of the rebellion he took strong ground against slavery and is now in favor of its complete extermination. So much for Pres. Johnson. How he will steer the good ship Union remains to be seen. We hope and pray for the best.

It does not seem possible to spare Lincoln at such times as these. The closing up of the rebellion without the sagacity of Lincoln to aid and direct hardly seems possible. But the Almighty Ruler of the Universe has seen fit, for wise reasons doubtless, to remove him. Let us bow in humble trust before Him who doeth all things well.

The Rev. Mr. Potter of the Baptist Church in Bantam said that President Lincoln's death will not be in vain. The Bible records of Sampson that he slew more at his death than at any one time ever. May it not be so now? The death of Lincoln in this awful frightful manner will I have no doubt bring out the energy of many a man who has done but little for the Union before.

No doubt some may even rejoice but it will be with the joy of demons.

We have been required to make great sacrifices for the defense of the country and the re-establishment of peace: but this last great sacrifice offered up on the country's altar seems the most costly and hardest to make.

Tuesday evening, April 18th--

I will resume writing to you but can write but a few lines at this time owing to the lateness of the hour.

There is not much news to write about except this terrible calamity at Washington. The excitement in Conn. is great. In New Haven and other cities merchants have been known to take costly goods from their stores and hang them out in wreaths and folds in token of mourning. From the flagpole in Bantam there floats at half mast a piece of crepe. Such national sorrow I have never witnessed before.

I believe the Lord will notice the sighing of the nation and in some way give speedy relief. All our hopes should be in Him at such times as this. We are led by this Providence to feel how weak is an arm of flesh. The Lord will be known as the Ruler of the Nations and his people should turn to him with penitence for the past and hope for the future.

No doubt the poor soldiers will feel this terrible blow more than we do. In President Lincoln they have lost more than a friend.

I was told on Sunday last by Col. Wessells that Mr. Garry Potter and Capt. Bissell were intending to start the next day for Washington expecting to get passes for Richmond, Va. They are hoping to send home four bodies from Cold Harbor and White House Point, viz. Wilson Potter, Lyman J. Smith, Jr., Robert Watts, and Apollus Morse and perhaps others if they can be obtained. It is a sad mission but we hope it will not be unsuccessful.

Charles Merriman is still in town. He is looking better than at first though he is somewhat bloated. I shook hands with him and looked on him as one of the sufferers of Sailsbury, N.C. I noticed the Hon. John H. Hubbard very kindly spoke to him.

Mr. Hubbard is a good man civil and politically speaking a good citizen and one that will make his worth known in the national councils. He is a growing man and I hope will rise to distinction and eminence. He is one of the most laborious members of the House of Representatives--an honor to old Conn.

Mrs. Williams is wishing to go to Washington, D.C. Mr. Williams is not doing very well. The corporal's wound you know is in his mouth and back of the head and he is suffering some from inflammation. She told me that he wrote perhaps she had better not come for he did not know what accommodations could be obtained for her. Whether she goes or not this week is more than I can tell. I do not remember what hospital in Washington he is in.

Litchfield, Conn. Wednesday evening

April 19th, 1865

Dear Lewis,

I have delayed sending my letter in hopes of hearing from you again. We were very much gratified this evening by your letter dated Clover Hill, Va., April 9th.

We had heard of Thursday's battle but the results and casualties we had not learned, so you may well judge we were very anxious respecting you. But the arrival of your letter has removed a load from our hearts and now while I am writing your mother is looking on the Va. map for Clover Hill where your letter is dated; which she has found in the center of Appomattox County.

We thank you a dozen times for sending us that young lady's "Rebel Letter." We have read it. Lawrence has read it. Says he thinks that she may be one of the ladies that went to school (illegible). Then Lawrence opened his mouth and let out one of his loud laughs. Dr. Wallace has also read it. So has Fred Bradley, Mr. Pond, etc.

You write of the cheering when Gen. Lee surrendered. I am glad you rejoiced when you found Lee willing to surrender.

You state that Gen. Wright took Lee's sword.

There was rejoicing in every town around here on hearing of the capture of Gen. Lee. But the dark day soon came when we learned of the death of our noble and lamented Lincoln.

There is an old woman in Litchfield by the name of Wright who shouted, "Glory to God," when she heard of Lincoln's murder. Her son butchers with the Merrimans. Chas. Merriman was staying with his brother and when the woman shouted he was mad and said if it had been a man should be tempted to kill him.

There may be a few that rejoice in the President's death, but I hope they are few. Mrs. Johnson is one of them but she is an old fool.

But I must think of closing.

We are well at this time except Samuel. He has a boil on his leg and has taken some cold that causes his throat to swell.

The Sewing Society (of Bantam) met at Grandmother Bissell's.

Mrs. Thompkins said she was confident she saw Garry Potter go past. If she is not deceived he is still in Litchfield.

Rev. Mr. Harrison of Milton is in the employ of the Christian Commission.

Philip has commenced a letter to you but he and Charley Kilbourn have gone after "Suckers" tonight and it will be too late for the morrow's mail.

Remember me to all of the boys I am acquainted with. Give my love to them. Tell them I wish them much joy in the speedy end of this war and hope they all will be permitted to return home soon.

With many prayers for your safety,

I am affectionately yours,

Henry B. Bissell

We hope to hear from you again soon. Hope you will now and always put your trust in the Lord. Read often in your Testament and amid the rejoicings for victory do not forget to give praise to the Lord for He is the right and can only give us a peace that shall be honorable and lasting.

Love from all and affectionately remembered by all.

In haste goodbye,

HBB

Letter #176

Camp 6th Corps Burkesville, Va.

April 17, 1865

Dear Father,

Last Friday we received a mail for the first time since the 31st of March. I received yours of April 2nd.

We are resting in camp near Burkesville, the junction of the South Side and Danville R.R. It is, at present, the base of supplies for the army.

They have been sending away the sick and wounded to City Point.

Sunday morning an official dispatch came to Corps Headquarters that Pres. Lincoln had been shot in three places. One pistol ball had entered his head and that he could live but a short time. Also that Sec. Seward and son had been shot and were in critical condition.

It seems impossible. We can't believe it. Of all men whose lives are of consequence, his is the most important to this nation, especially at this time when the civil power is about to be put in force in the rebellious portions of the U.S. He above all other men was the man to do it. But we must hope it is only a rumor.

Large numbers of rebels have been coming in. They are paroled. Then they leave for home as fast as possible.

I have seen a good many of them and have talked with some. They all say that Gen. Grant will handle a large army and drive them (the rebels) wherever he has a mind to. When Lee surrendered, they said, it was no use fighting anymore. They would not fire another gun. One said, "It is of no use. You are too much for us."

All the way from Petersburg up to as far as we went, I did not see any signs of active farming. Not much wheat had been sowed neither were there many signs of corn. Everything seemed run down. The country looks as if no improvements had been made for the last four years. Nor would there be for as many more if Jeff presided at Richmond. No one seems to care or trouble themselves about Jeff.

When we marched up towards Lynchburg the inhabitants all left taking their movable property and slaves. After Lee's surrender

they came home. When we marched back they came out to look at us, especially the negroes. They would come out and talk with the boys. Now and then we saw one who seemed to be smart and shrewd. Everyone had a broad grin.

One old darky said, "Are you Massa Abe's boys?" We replied, "We is." "Well," said he, "we is been looking for your coming but when you come Massa took us with him. But we is mighty glad to see you."

When we asked them where Lee was, they would say, "Well, he went by here dis morning and told us de Yanks would cut our throats. Your mounted men, dey follow close after him and kept shooting all de time. Dey kept getting out of de way as fast as dey could. Now and den one of dere mule teams give out an dey just burn de wagon an go on."

Tuesday, 18th--

The news of the president's death has been confirmed. It is reported that he was shot by a theatrical performer by the name of Booth. He followed Lincoln from Richmond for that purpose. That is the story here.

What will the nation do without him just at this time? It seems as if there is no man in the United States who can administer or conduct the affairs of the nation so well as he.

What will Andrew Johnson do when he comes into power? I presume the wine cup will be his chief councilor. If he reforms I think he will show but little mercy to those who persist in fighting.

The death of the president has cast a shadow of gloom over the army. The men who were so bouyant and cheerful are now silent and sad. The loss of the president is keenly felt by all.

The weather is very mild. It is about six weeks earlier than with you. Peach trees blossomed sometime ago. The forest trees are beginning to leaf out. The grass is up in places. Wheat is from six to eight inches high. I have not seen any corn being planted as yet.

Along the Appomattox the land is very good but in most places the usual Virginia farming has been followed. That is plow a field until it is good for nothing, then turn it out and plow up a new one. I have seen hundreds of acres that once were good as any land ever cultivated but which will not now raise mullen.

Tobacco has been raised very extensively. When we marched through Farmville we found tons of tobacco stored which the rebels did not burn for lack of time.

Gen. Grant had his headquarters in a large hotel. When we marched by it the boys sang Old John Brown.

The rebels burned the bridge by which they did not make anything as it would have been of some help to their half starved after the surrender.

While we have been out on this campaign at times we have lived on half rations. In seventeen days we have drawn but one ration of pork. Most of the time we have lived on coffee and hard-tack. Some days we have cooked but twice.

The papers will give you as correct information as I can as the newspaper correspondents have every advantage for finding all the particulars while we have to get news the best way we can.

I must close for the present as we are to move camp about half a mile.

We have moved camp.

To pull down my tent, march half a mile took five hours including cooking dinner of fresh beef, coffee and hardtack.

There is a rumor in camp that we are to leave the corps any day but we are still here.

The army is resting very quietly.

Everyone talks of the president's death. All seem to think it one of the greatest losses that the nation has had since Washington.

The men are talking of returning home by the Fourth of July. They are now feeling somewhat rested from the tiresome marches.

All of Co. A are well. They have stood the marches very well indeed, but few fell out.

We miss Goodwin Oshorn every day. The boys often speak of him. He was about the last man in the regiment who was shot. One was mortally wounded at Sailor's Creek and died soon afterwards.

It seems wonderful that we escaped with so little loss after so much fighting.

Sergt. Gibbs and Corp. Briggs of Co. B have gone home on a sixty day furlough. These furloughs were given them by Gen. Meade as each captured a rebel flag.

But I must think of closing.

Tell Amelia, Cornelia and mother that they will hear from me soon.

Hoping to hear from you, I remain

Very affectionately your son,

Lewis

P.S. Enclosed is a two dollar Confederate note and my 9th State Order now due.

Letter #177

Camp at Burkesville, April 18, 1865

Dear Sister,

As you have been so kind as to write me a letter, I will endeavor to answer.

Since we left Petersburg, I have been so busy I have not found time to sleep or even cook coffee.

Most of the way we had to march by the side of the road leaving it clear for the artillery and ammunition trains which always have to keep with the army.

On the march every house along the road was deserted by the whites. They left their property in the hands of their negroes. But after the rebel General Lee surrendered to Grant they came back as soon as they heard of it.

Our boys got hold of some of the rebel money. They would first visit the hen house then go to the house and bargain for the hens telling the owner that if they did not sell the hens someone would steal them. The boys would offer to pay for them with rebel money. After some hesitation it would be accepted. Finally the owner would pocket the money and then go to the hen house to find all of their poultry among the missing.

The little slave, all in rags, would come out and open their eyes to see so many men with muskets on their shoulders.

One old slave said, "Bless de Lord, ye Yanks have come and set we poor niggers free. Dis am de happiest day of my life."

All of the slaves are poorly dressed. Most of them are in rags.

One afternoon we halted near the house where the rebel General Jo Johnson was born, and lived until he was fifteen years of age.

One of our bands commenced playing a dancing tune so the young darkies came out to hear the music. As every nigger alive can dance they were soon on the tilt. It was truly amusing to see them perform. Our men laughed to their hearts content.

Some of the slaves packed up their effects in bundles which they put on their heads and then followed after us. Usually they are sent back as we cannot provide for them.

But I must close.

I hope you will write often. I expect we will come home by the Fourth of July--but not before.

I remain ever your loving brother,
Lewis

Letter #178

Danville, Va., April 28, 1865 Friday

Dear Father,

The mail leaves in twenty minutes but I will write a few lines to let you know I am still well.

Since last Sunday we have marched 95 miles reaching here last night.

We are now encamped south of the town about two miles from the N.C. line.

We are very tired and hope to rest here.

The weather has been fine, no rain since we started.

All of the boys are along. A great many of them have blistered their feet, but I am sound.

Myron has carried my woolen blanket on the adjutant's horse so I have got along very well indeed.

There are many fine plantations in this part of the state. Slavery flourished here. We counted from fifty to ten. On some of the plantations there were two hundred hands.

Danville is situated on the Dan River.

Our advance reached the river at 11 A.M. yesterday. The inhabitants were at work cutting away the bridge, but we prevented them from doing so.

Found quite a number of locomotives and cars.

But I must close

Goodbye (not signed)

Letter #179

Camp C.V.A. Danville, Va., April 29, 1865

Dear Mother,

Having rested myself a little I have taken out a sheet of rebel note paper on which to write you a few lines.

I am enjoying very good health indeed, but feel like an old worn out draft horse.

Since the (illegible) of April we have marched about twenty-seven miles a day. The distance from Burkesville to Danville by

rail is eighty-three miles but we marched nearer one hundred miles by the road. You must remember that an army does not always march by the shortest route but rather by the one which is best for the artillery and baggage trains.

Sunday morning we were ordered to pick up and be ready to move at daylight. This we did and started in the direction of Danville or Damnvill, as the boys call it for the reason that here was a great prison pen of the Confederacy.

The day was very cool. That night we halted at Meherrin Station after a march of about twenty miles.

Monday morning April 24th we started about sunrise. Marched a few miles on the railroad tracks then turned off on the pike. The country through which we marched was well wooded and very well watered.

During the day we passed some very handsome planter's houses. We could count from five to fifty slaves from one month old up to ninety-nine years.

That night we halted on the banks of the Roanoke near Clover and on a plantation once owned by John Randolph one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Tuesday April 25th we crossed the Roanoke on pontoons. We passed one house where I counted fifty slaves in one group by the road side. They were of all ages and of both sexes. On the plantation their master had two hundred.

In every direction tobacco houses are to be seen. They are made of logs and are very airy.

About noon we reached the village of Laurel Hill. It is situated on high ground overlooking quite a large extent of country. It is very much scattered and about as large as Milton.

We reached Halifax C.H. just at sundown, crossed the river and went into camp for the night on the banks.

Wednesday we marched through the town with our flag waving and band playing. It is quite a town, about as large as Terryville. It is situated about five miles from the railroad and on the Stanton River, I think. The country was more hilly and under better cultivation. There were plenty of springs along the road. Planter's houses or mansions, as they call them, are more numerous. The ground is much better. Large fields of wheat are to be seen. In some places corn has been hoed. The soil is sandy, the wood mostly oak and beech, but few pines. Rail fences are seen everywhere and oak at that.

We halted for the night about half way from Halifax to Danville. Our division led the advance.

Thursday April 27th we started for Danville or Damnvill as the soldiers call it and it was damned by not a few.

We reached the north bank of the river Dan about 5 P.M. The day was quite warm.

The 2nd Division led the advance. Gen. Wright's cavalry escort acted as scouts. When the advance was within two miles of the river a report came that some rebel cavalry was at work cutting down the bridge over the river.

(remainder missing)

Dear Father,

I received yours of April 27th on Saturday May 6th here at Burkesville. I also received one on the march to Danville.

In eight days we marched two hundred miles.

We rested four days at Danville then turned our faces homeward. The division took the cars for Burkesville except our regiment which was detailed by Gen. Wheaton to guard the wagon trains back to Burkesville overland.

We had our knapsacks and haversacks carried. Those who were footsore and lame rode in the ambulances.

Our day's march was twenty-five miles. Usually we left camp at 6 A.M. and went into camp at 5 P.M.

You will find in the papers a better description of Danville than I can give. One thing I will say. It is the cleanest and healthiest city that I have seen in Va. and the best situated.

The country around Danville is hilly and well watered with plenty of good springs and streams. With the exception of the Shenandoah it is the best land in the state.

Here the tobacco plant flourishes. In every direction tobacco houses are to be seen. The planters have not raised much since the commencement of the war. The Confederate Government would not allow them to raise tobacco.

Here slavery flourished as much if not more than in any other section. I have seen some of the planters and talked a little with them. They don't think much of a fifteen hundred acre farm. When they have two, three, five or six thousand acres of land they have a tolerable large plantation. One planter said he did not know how many acres he had but he owned a tract four miles square and had about three hundred hands.

When we said it was a disadvantage to him he said, "I know it but the old maxim is still true. The more a man has the more he wants."

I have counted in groups by the road side twenty-five to sixty slaves mostly women and children. Some of the little darkies had nothing on but a shirt made of the coarsest cloth. They ran around bare-headed in the dirt and dust. All of the field hands were very poorly clothed, the women better than the men.

They are very ignorant, think they must pack up and leave for the north which is the worst thing they can do for themselves at present. If they remain on their old Master's plantation and work for wages they will be much better off.

If Mr. Vaille wants to try contrabands as help on his plantation, here there is a splendid chance for him to select as many as he needs.

I have seen some pretty smart young men and women that would do a good day's work and earn good wages.

As soon as the military power is removed there will be a good chance for capitalists and speculators to make money. The country south of here will be filled with immigrants as it is new and not worn out land like that around Petersburg and Richmond.

But one thing, give me a chance to get out of the state and I will improve it.

We are getting very homesick. All of the boys are in the fidgetts. Two corps of Sherman's Army passed within a few miles from here

enroute for Richmond and Washington.

Our regiment is at its old business at the depot and provost office doing guard duty. Cos. F, G & H are at Farmville guarding government stores and doing provost duty.

Our division is between here and Richmond. The rest of the corps is at Danville and along the road between here and there.

This afternoon a train from Danville loaded with some of the Harper's Ferry machinery came up. Yesterday they brought up a printing press and all of the machinery that goes with it.

They have quite a number of cannon of all descriptions. They run from a sixty-four pound smooth bore down to a five pound brass gun about three feet long weighing not over one hundred pounds, a very good plaything. Among them were two U.S. three inch guns.

There is a world of rebel arms scattered all over the south. What the government will do with so many cannon I don't know.

But I must close for the night. We have to be on duty every other day.

Goodnight.

Wednesday, May 10th --

This morning I received yours and Philip's letters of May 5. They find me well and still in camp.

We are expecting to move from here everyday and march to Washington. This we don't like very much.

I hear that already the government is mustering all troops. Our turn cannot come any too soon I assure you.

Everything around here is going on very well. We have seen some paroled prisoners from Johnson's army. The inhabitants in this vicinity are more afraid of the paroled rebel soldiers than of our men.

I have talked with some who tell me that when Lee's men went home they took horses and mules to ride on and use thereafter. Horses and mules are scarce in this region. Planters are around buying up old mules and horses. Three horses were stolen from Gen. Hamlin a few nights ago, presumably by civilians or rebel soldiers.

Our supply train is loading with eight days' rations. The division is going to move in some direction, north I hope.

The slaves come here in droves. All want to get "Norf" now and they are free. They are very ignorant and don't know what is best for themselves. Now they are free they think they can live by doing nothing but loaf around the depots and camps.

Col. H. had over a hundred of them sweeping camp for the boys. Some of them are at it now. The boys give them harlick to eat. They are death on drinking coffee.

I asked one old darky what his master gave him to eat. "Well, Old Massa was very good to me. He gib me all the corn brad an hoe cake an hog meat I want an dat was enuff."

All citizens and rebel officers say that the loss of President Lincoln was the worst thing that could have happened to the South. They fear Johnson more than Lincoln. One man said the south never knew his worth until after his death.

We hear that the ladies are getting a new State Flag for the regiment. They will have to hurry if they intend to have us carry it home with us or we will be home before it is finished.

I have heard that Booth who murdered the president was shot in a barn down toward the Rappahannock River. It was too easy a death

for him. I am both glad and sorry that his career is ended, glad that he is where he cannot harm anyone, sorry that he was not captured alive and suffered at the hands of the government.

The next time I write I hope I will be nearer home than this.

The boys wish to be remembered to you.

Give my best respects to Theodore when you see him.

Give my love to all the family and friends.

I remain very affectionately,

Your son,

Lewis

Letter #181

Camp Burkesville, Va.

May 14, 1865

Dear Brother Phill,

As sufficient time has elapsed since the receipt of your letter dated April 30th I will, very deliberately, try and answer it to the best of my ability.

The news from this quarter of Virginia is unimportant as all war operations are at an end and like old sailors we are resting on our oars or rather under our tents.

Our tents are in the cooling shade of a friendly pine grove.

Plenty of darkies are around. The boys get them to do their washing, clear their muskets, and cook their meals, etc. They pay them in hardtack and old clothes. They are eager to get ahold of our old uniforms.

Yesterday a detachment of colored troops was here. I wish you could have seen the negroes look at them as they walked around with their straps on and muskets on their shoulders.

I see by the papers that the Army of the Potomac has arrived at Alexandria. We see very few signs of our leaving these parts but we may leave any day. I hope they will be able to find transportation for us but I think the chances are good that we will march.

This morning we received the Litchfield Enquirer. By that I see that Adjutant Vaill, Mr. Potter and Adam Watt are on their way to Richmond to get the bodies of Wilson, Robert Watt, Apollus Morse and Lyman Smith.

4 P.M. --

I have been interrupted and commence anew.

This noon we were very much surprised and pleased to see Adjutant Vaill and Adam Watt. Mr. Potter remained at Richmond with Capt. Burnham. I hardly knew Mr. Watt but he knew me. The Adjutant is not very well.

From Mr. Watt I learned that they could not find the graves of Robert and Lyman Smith. Lyman had a head board, put up by Hinsdale and myself. But this could not be found so Mr. Watt came here.

It is thought by some that the brigade will leave for Manchester Thursday. If we do I or Hinsdale will be able to go to Cold Harbor with Mr. W. if he can remain here until then.

Quite a large number of paroled rebel prisoners from Point Lookout passed through here enroute for N.C. and other parts of the genial South.

The people of the different counties are appointing their civil officers and doing other business for the public good.

The slaves that have been lazing around the Junction doing nothing are making themselves scarce. They find it does not bring bread to their mouths so therefore they are looking out for their hoe cake.

Gen. Wright has gone to Richmond as has Gen. Wheaton.

The latest report has it that the 1st Brigade leaves for Manchester tomorrow, the 3rd the next day, and we about Thursday. This is the way the boys have it arranged.

They are sending up all kinds and descriptions of ancient and modern fire-arms and other implements of war too numerous to mention. The boys have rebel dirks, bowie knives, cutlasses, boarding pikes, lances, great clumsy sabres and several cords of musket barrels. A large number of ten inch and smaller shells also have arrived. All this has to be unloaded and then reloaded for Petersburg as it is necessary to change cars here.

All of this comes from Danville which was one of the worst viper nests of Rebeldom. Some of our men were told, by the citizens of Danville that Jeff Davis after he reached Jo Johnson's army that he ordered Johnson to send a small force to Danville and destroy the bridges and government property. When the citizens learned of this they sent to Gen. Meade and asked him to send a force down to prevent it. So it was that we were the unfortunate ones who had to view the southern part of the state.

Myron tells me that he has received the sad news of his grandmother's death. I saw it in the paper, also. It took me by surprise. M. tells me, she died of old age. She lived from the first Revolution to the end of the 2nd Revolution.

Do you hear anything about Florence Dudley? I suppose her mother will worry herself all of the time she is away.

Tuesday 16th --

Mr. Watt and Sergt. Hinsdale left for Richmond this noon. Adjutant Vaill will remain with the regiment.

It is generally understood that we leave here tomorrow or next day for Manchester.

Most of the officers think we will go by transports to Washington to be there for the grand review which is to be about June 5th.

I wish you could be there. Can't you contrive some way to be there? When the army is disbanded the opportunity will be lost. I will entertain you while in camp the best circumstances will permit.

I think that Watt and Hinsdale will be successful in obtaining the bodies of Robert and Lyman.

Letter #182

Manchester, Va., May 19th, 1865

Dear Father,

This morning I received your very welcome letter of the 14th and to which I will now begin an answer.

We left Burkesville Thursday evening by rail and reached Manchester about one at night. We got off the cars and slept near the station.

Friday morning we marched through the town and are now encamped on the left hand side of the Petersburg pike and within sight of the 8th C.V. Their camp is a half mile from us on the river bank.

I have not been in Richmond yet but if we remain here long enough shall visit it if I have to run away from camp.

I have seen Will Cables and Frank Gilbert. Frank is in the sharpshooters.

Their camp is very pleasant. They have old rebel A tents which have been made over into Wall tents. They have but little to do just now as they have been taken out of the brigade to which they belonged. At present they are under the provost marshal's orders. Their prospects of remaining in the service for some time are better than ours. They would like to change places with us. I for one can't see it.

Gen. Wright thinks we will not leave here before Monday or Tuesday of next week.

Fort Darling is about four miles from here. I very much want to see it and the other places of note in and around Richmond.

Adam Watt, Mr. Potter, Capt. Burnham and Hinsdale went to Cold Harbor and found the remains of Lyman Smith, Robert Watt and Almon Bradley. Now they are on their way home. Bones only were found. Sergt. Hinsdale had no difficulty in finding their graves.

Adjutant Vaill is much better and will remain with the regiment. He limps very little.

Wm. Cables is the same boy that he was when he left home. Has about so much talk in him and like the old crazy man, "It's all in and must come out."

Frank Gilbert has grown a good deal. He looks tough and healthy. He has been down to see me this morning.

I also saw Benjamin Page of Milton. He is not on duty as he is troubled by an old wound that he received at Fort Harrison where Seth Plumb was killed.

The 8th C.V. are reduced to a small regiment. They draw rations for about two hundred and fifty men. Co. E has about eleven privates and seven non-commissioned officers for duty. Cables and Page are about the only old Litchfield men left.

I suppose you would like a very graphic description of the surrounding country, as much as I am able to give from what I have seen.

As yet I have not looked around and have made but few inquiries about the different localities and points of interest.

Friday morning May 19th I was awakened by the band's playing, the reveille, dug my eyes open and I looked the Old Hay Maker right in the face just as he was rising over the heights on the east side of the James. I crawled out and looked around.

At my feet flowed the James River which runs very swiftly among the rocks.

The railroad bridge was destroyed by the rebels in their flight.

The first thing I saw north of the river was the State House of Virginia rising high above the surrounding objects and standing in bold relief. A monument of treason for within its walls more treason has been hatched than in all the South.

That portion along the river has been burned as well as all the bridges.

On this side of the river the rebels have thrown up three lines of heavy works. We are encamped behind the inside line. The works are so thick that three men can walk abreast on top of them.

Every few rods are places for batteries.

All that spade and pick could do for the defense of Richmond the rebel government had done. But to no advantage--U.S. Grant would not grant them anymore time to hold them so he took them into his care and keeping.

Everything looked as if it had been running down for the last four years.

I have just been talking with some women who came from Manchester with pies to sell. I asked one of them how she liked our money. "Oh!" said she, "now we can carry our money in our pockets and our merchandise in a basket. But before Richmond fell it was the other way--we needed the basket to carry the money and the pocket to carry what we purchased."

Around Richmond and in fact all over this portion of the state they seemed pleased that Jeff Davis has been arrested. Some think he will not be punished severely but I guess they are much mistaken. If the Government is afraid to punish him I wish Pres. Johnson would hand him over to the 6th Corps to be dealt with as it thinks best.

Cherries are past their prime. Strawberries and garden vegetables are beginning to make their appearance. Butter is from twenty to thirty cents. Milk I know little about.

One thing I am surprised at is, that before the war the country around Richmond was very heavily wooded but now it is different.

Richmond like ancient Rome is built on hills rising from the river and facing the south. Some portions are very sightly and I believe afford a good view of the lower part of the city (old Libby included) and the surrounding country.

You spoke about David Candee and Benjamin Rathbun. We have just received official news of Rathbun's death, at Andersonville, Georgia, soon after Candee's death. We received official news of Candee's death. I don't know where further information can be obtained.

I hope that when next I write it will be in the vicinity of Alexandria or Washington.

Give my love to all the family and friends.

From your affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. I will send today's Richmond Times.

Letter #183

Camp 2nd C.V.A.

On the road to Washington--25 miles from
Fredericksburg, Va., (May 28, 1865)

Dear Father,

As we are now on the road to Washington and are mud bound about eight miles from Chesterfield Station toward Fredericksburg, I have taken my pen in hand to let you know I am still alive and on the road home.

The mail carrier has just been around and told us that a mail will leave the corps at Fredericksburg. I thought I would improve the opportunity and write.

Friday afternoon we reached Chesterfield Station. That night it commenced to rain and continued all day Saturday.

Gen. Wright did not move the corps until 9 A.M. The roads were very sandy and every small stream was over its banks. We worked hard to go eight miles.

The wagons got stuck in the mud. They hitched from eight to ten mules on a wagon and then could not pull them out. They had to unhitch and let them remain until this afternoon.

We went into camp here Saturday night and will not leave until tomorrow morning. Part of the train has gone on ahead. We will reach Fredericksburg tomorrow night if nothing happens. A large quantity of water has fallen and as the country is level it does not run off very fast. It will take us until Thursday night to get to Washington if not longer.

We left Manchester Wednesday morning marched through Richmond, by platoons. We went through the principle streets and past the State Capitol where there was quite a crowd of "starred" gentry. They were Maj. Gens. Halleck, Wright, Gregg and others I did not know. Brig. Gens. Mackenzie and Abbott were there also.

The 24th Corps were paraded in line at various places on the pavements and stood at attention as we passed.

I saw the 8th Conn. who gave us three cheers--also the 10th Conn. The first night we camped at Hanover Court House, the next at Chesterfield Station.

I should like to see some of you at Washington if any of you can leave. No other chance will be given to see the 6th Corps after it is disbanded. They will be reviewed before being sent home.

All of the men are eager to get home as soon as possible.

I have written in a great hurry.

Give my love to all. The next you hear from me will be from Washington.

Tell Phill to come if possible. I will give him a small specimen of camp life in a shelter tent and entertain him the best I can.

I am well as ever.

I remain your very affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #184

Camp 2nd C.V.H.A., Washington D.C.,

Dear Father,

We reached here yesterday noon from Fairfax Court House and are now encamped about four miles from Washington, northeast of Baileys Cross Roads and in the rear of Arlington Heights. Our camp is situated in a field of tall grass.

All of the boys and I are well but very tired after our march of one hundred and fifty miles.

One hundred and twenty men of the 14th Conn. have joined this regiment. They came here last night. Lyman Sweet is among them. The old man left for home Thursday.

When we will go, I don't know.

I must close.

Received yours of May 21st at Fairfax Court House. I wrote you while at Fredericksburg.

We have just had roll call. The sun has not as yet shown himself above the hills of Maryland. I would like to see some of

you here now for you will never again have a chance to see a large army. Perhaps your farming will not permit you to come.

A mail goes in a very few moments so I must say goodbye.

Love to all,

Lewis

How long we will remain here we don't know. Troops from the 2nd and 5th Corps are being sent home every day.

The Hon. John H. Hubbard is in Washington. He has not been out here yet.

I will take some little time to make out the papers if the regiment all goes home together. If only the old men go we will be home in a short time. As yet it has not been decided whether the old men go first or all of the regiment goes at the same time.

If any come to Washington to see the boys, first they must find where the corps is then the division and the brigade. Then they will have no further trouble.

Letter #185

Camp 2nd C.V.H.A., June 12, 1865

Dear Father,

I received yours of the 9th the evening of the 10th. It had a quick passage and was all the more welcome.

Since I last wrote nothing has taken place, of unusual importance, in this immediate vicinity.

No troops, that I know of, have left the corps. Our papers for the 62 men have been sent in but have not been returned. How long we will remain here is impossible to guess. All sorts of rumors are afloat but they don't amount to anything. I am still in hopes that the 4th of July will see us home. If so, we will have to start soon.

All those in the hospitals who are able and fit to be sent home are being discharged and go on their way rejoicing.

Saturday I went to Fairfax Seminary Hospital and saw Henry Hotchkiss and Geo. Bradley. They were expecting to be discharged sometime this week. So you may expect to see them home before long. Hotchkiss is looking well. Bradley is about the same as usual.

Since the review we are doing nothing but laying quietly in camp and living on government rations. My money went when we lived on half rations.

Our rations are: one third of the time hard tack, the remainder army bread, pork, fresh beef, beans, coffee and sugar.

Most of the men are feeling quite well but all are uneasy at not getting out before this. They do not see the use of keeping so large an army now that the war is over.

This is a great place for red tapeism. We are beginning to think that the reason why we don't get out is the lack of tape.

While we have been in our present camp I have been reading a book entitled "Our Boys" written by one of the Pennsylvania Reserves. Some of the ground described I have been over. To me, it is quite interesting.

I will go to the captain and get the official communication from the War Department and copy it for Mrs. Candee.

The man Rathbun was captured a few days before Candee and died about Dec. 1st or 15th.

One who has been accustomed to good living and has never known hunger has but a faint idea of the reality. How often have I imagined all sorts of good things to eat when there was nothing of the kind within a hundred miles.

Now it is all over. Peace reigns once again where war's stern hand held unlimited sway. Now we can lie down at night and not be wakened by the long roll or the sound of cannon.

I have been reading the testimony in the trial of the assassination conspirators. I think Jeff will be roped in and I hope given a limited amount of hemp or cotton rope, not enough to allow his feet or hoops to touch the ground.

Last summer I saw one man hung at Poolsville, Md. Then I said I never wanted to see another, but since Jeff's capture, I have changed my mind. Now I would like to see him hung petticoats and all or help hang him if necessary.

Perhaps you will think I am becoming bloodthirsty. Well, if you had been through what I have and seen what I have seen on the battlefield you would agree with me that Jeff can't suffer any too much for the ruin which has come upon the country because of his wicked ambition. Why! Napoleon is lost to view when one speaks of ambition.

But enough of this. I am no politician and want but little to do with politics.

If Mr. Kilbourn wants to help the blacks there is a good opportunity here in Virginia. He can come down here and give his advice and money. The latter will be very happily received. There are a large number of blacks who are too young and others who are too old to earn a living and must be supported either by the government or charity. These are the ones that suffer by being free. As slaves they were provided for by their masters. Perhaps Mr. K. has a way by which their wants will be supplied but to me it looks as if a good many will suffer.

Gradual emancipation would have been the best way for every black. Immediate emancipation throws between three and five million poor, ignorant blacks out upon the cold world. Many of them are helpless and unable to shift for themselves. This I know to be true.

At Burkesville I saw them bag in hand crowd around the provost marshal and commissary to get something to eat.

A great many of the planters have turned them away and say as they have no work for them they will not feed them.

I suppose the "coppers" will preach their loyal sermons on every Democratic stump and when one's back is turned, spit their poisonous venom and shed crocodile tears over the lamented Lincoln if anyone will say Jeff ought not to be hung.

Since I commenced writing it has commenced raining on my canvass roof.

I have packed a shelter tent. If it arrives home I suppose the little folks will have it out, pitched, try to see how it goes and how they like it. Care must be taken not to fold it up while damp for it will mildew and be spoiled. The two ropes are guys. A stake is driven out a little way from the standard. The guy is fastened to it to prevent the tent from being blown over.

Enclosed is an express receipt for the box. You will notice that the express agent spelled your name and the town's wrong but

I think it will arrive all right.

John Bishop is in good flesh. If his wife were to cook for him she would be busy most of the time for as John expresses it, he is death on pies.

I very much wish you could have been here for the review. I think for those who had never seen much of an army it was well worth seeing.

But I must close.

There is no knowing how long we are to remain here or how soon we go home. It may be this week--perhaps next or next month. When the order comes, we go.

Give my love to all. Tell Uncle Ensign that I'll make him a visit when I return. One will have to be careful what he eats after living on government rations so long.

I suppose the little folks are trying the shelter tent and blanket. I hope they enjoy themselves. Well, let them have it out.

I suppose they are hatching up questions to ask me when I come marching home.

We have just received the Litchfield Sentinel. From it we learn that you and another Litchfielder are making preparations for a grand 4th of July celebration partly in honor of the Old Nineteenth and partly because the war is over.

Almost all of the boys have gone to bed or to their bunks and I must follow their example. It is impossible to sleep in the day time on account of the flies.

Give my love to all the family and friends.

Hoping to be home soon, I remain

Your affectionate son,

Lewis

Letter #186

Fort Davis, D.C., June 15, 1865

Dear Father,

I will pen a few lines to you today.

Once more we have left the 6th Corps and are now in the defenses of Washington, south of East Branch and on the Maryland side of the Potomac.

Col. Hubbard received orders yesterday to report to Gen. Hancock. This he did this morning so we left the corps and the brigade and came hither.

Fort Davis is just above the Navy Yard bridge. It is very pleasantly situated on high ground from which we have a fine view of Camp Barry and the suburbs of Washington.

Some think our moving here will prevent our leaving for home but I do not think so.

There is but little news to write about.

I saw one train loaded with soldiers going home. Some of the 6th Corps have gone.

It is a slow job to make out correctly the necessary papers so that every man gets all of his pay and settles his clothing account. Besides there is just so much red tape formality to be gone through or a soldier would not be mustered according to military tactics.

As letters from Litchfield will reach us in less than forty-eight hours there will be no danger of their being lost by delay. We will not get away from here before the last of next week if then. Please write and direct your letters to Washington D.C. leaving out the brigade, division and corps.

I think the regiment will remain here until it is sent home. The order for mustering out the 1862 men immediately remains good.

You need not expect us home until we come. Our approach will be heralded.

Fort Davis mounts twelve guns. It is to be dismantled and abandoned.

I don't know in how many forts our regiment is. There are two companies here A and E. Capt. Potter is in command.

I suppose you are busy as ever especially now plowing out corn and getting ready for buckwheat.

There are about three acres of corn within a stone's throw of where I am writing. It is up higher than it would be with you on the 15th of July. Down in Richmond it is much higher. Garden vegetables are plentiful but I don't bother to eat them as I haven't what will get them. Money is out of the question and will be until we are mustered out. If you have any loose change about the house, I would like to see some of it down this way.

Please write upon the receipt of this.

There is not much news that I can think of. John Bishop still holds his own and does not lose his appetite which is of inestimatable value to him.

The mail has just come and John has a letter from home. I presume it will remind him of something good to eat or the place where it may be found.

But I must close hoping to "cum hum" before long, the sooner the better.

Give my love to all the family and friends and accept this from
Your affectionate son,
Lewis

Letter #187

Fort Snyder, D.C., June 24th, 1865

Dear Father,

I received your letter in due time for which I am very thankful. When I wrote you not to write we were expecting to be mustered out very soon and I would have been on the road home before your letter could have reached me.

Just then we left the corps and orders to muster us out came twenty-four hours too late. Now we have to wait the movements of the War Dept. which are very slow. They don't seem to be in any hurry about us but if there is a regiment that is riotous and making trouble they are sure to get transportation immediately.

Yesterday Col. Hubbard received a telegram from the Quartermaster's Dept. asking how many 1862 men there were in the regiment for whom transportation is to be furnished. This looks a little like going home soon. But I don't know exactly the hour of departure. Well, it can't come any too soon for me. I very much want to get home before the 4th of July.

The coming Fourth is one that will be long remembered by all. Well, may the Nation rejoice that peace has taken the place of war,

the shouts of victory, the battle charge and the cry of "Down with the Traitor."

Never since the world was made has such stirring events taken place in any nation as have happened in this one in the past four years.

While I am writing Thomas Beach has arrived, dressed in a full suit of citizen's clothes. He said he will start for Conn. in a few days. He looks about the same as he did three years ago.

Yesterday two of our boys in Washington hospitals received their discharges and came here to visit us before going home.

Some of the boys have just asked me if I am writing home and giving directions for a suit of citizen's clothes.

Col., now Brigadier General Hubbard, has just ridden up with his star on.

Lieut. Col. Skinner is in command of the regiment.

Sunday evening, June 25th --

Tonight we received orders to be ready to move as it was expected we would change places with the 1st Maine Arty. now near Alexandria.

The prospects of our getting home look more and more gloomy. We are now beginning to think that our chances are good for remaining in the service until next September. If we do and we find out that any of our officers have used their influence to keep us here we will just mob them. I don't approve of such proceedings but there is a time when forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

The Connecticut state agent in Washington has told some of our boys that it was not the fault of the War Dept. that we were not sent home but was the fault of the commanding officer.

When the old men are taken out it will take most of the non-commissioned officers in whom they place confidence and dependence.

But here we are under military rule and helpless. If someone could use his influence and bring us to the knowledge of the proper authorities he would confer a great favor on us.

It is a shame and disgrace to the government if they allow officers to keep in service soldiers who have been in service three years, with little or no bounty, have done their duty whenever and wherever called upon and if there is no reason why they can't be mustered out.

I would like to know why we are not as good as the other 1862 men.

Col. Hubbard is to wear a star on his strap, so I am told.

I hear that Theodore Vaill has sent a contraband home to the pastor to keep him company and do the work until he can get home.

The money you so kindly sent me would not pass here except at a heavy discount but Tom Beach changed with me for greenbacks as he is going home soon and says he can use it. Nothing but greenbacks and National Bank currency will pass here.

Tom may be home by the 4th of July.

Perhaps we may be so fortunate as to reach home by or before the 4th of July.

If the Hon. John Hubbard comes home and tells you that the boys are contented, happy and willing to remain in service, do set every word down as a falsehood.

Perhaps his nephew, Col. Hubbard, is perfectly contented and is willing to remain in service at \$11 a day but every man

of the Old 19th or 2nd will tell you or anyone it is no such thing. Everyone of us are anxious to get home as soon as possible.

If we have been in service three years we are not fools. Some will find this out to their sorrow when we return home.

Officers can earn from \$5 to \$11 a day while the men get from 50 to 60¢ a day.

Perhaps they will tell you that we will have to wait the movements of the War Dept. Now, there has been ample time for us to be sent home. Gen. Wright in command of the 6th Corps was very much surprised to learn we had not gone to the state and said there was no excuse or reason why we should have been sent long ago.

Perhaps you will think I am growing impatient. Well, anyone would be if they had gone through what I have for the past three years, without a furlough, be shot at and then be treated this way--like a dog--it is the height of meanness and insult to men black or white.

About the blankets of Goodwin's. If there were three blankets it is all right. There ought to be one for me, one for Myron and Goodwin. If they are all there send one to his father.

As to money, I don't like to have you risk sending it now unless someone is coming down here by whom you can send it.

Yours and mother's letters were most acceptable and very interesting. We don't get much mail now as friends hold back thinking we will be home soon. But write for in case we should leave for home I shall leave my P.O. address and all letters will be remailed.

In case we start for Conn. I will write so that it will reach you before we reach the state.

(not signed)

Letter #188

Fort Ethan Allen, Va., June 29, 1865

Dear Father,

There are no prospects of our coming home in some time so I have taken up my pen to write a few lines as I have a few moments to spare.

I have given up all hope of being home by the 4th of July. If we were we should have to start tomorrow morning. But the prospects are no better than when we first came here.

I hear that almost every day a brigade of the Army of the Potomac goes home and still we are here and likely to remain.

I suppose the Hon. John H. Hubbard will tell you that the boys are contented, happy and willing to remain in service as long as wanted. That will be a falsehood, every word of it. All he has been to Washington for was to help Col. Hubbard be made a Brigadier General. He even had the face to tell some of the regiment that it was of no use to make an application to be sent home as every regiment has to wait its turn. If that is so our turn will come about Sept. 11th.

Perhaps we are fools and believe all that some M.C.'s tell us but they will find out they are much mistaken and soldiers have minds of their own--at least they have in this regiment.

We left Fort Snyder the 27th and came here. There are eight companies here.

The fort is quite large and has a wide range.

Three companies are at Fort Massachusetts just above here. One company is at Chain Bridge and one at Gen. DeRussy's headquarters.

This fort is about a mile from Washington, at the upper end of the line, on the south side of the river.

All but one regiment of our old brigade in the 6th Corps have gone home. We feel very much disappointed in having to spend the Fourth here in Virginia. If the regiment is not sent home in good season there will be rioting among the men. There is a time when forbearance ceases to be a virtue even among soldiers. When a soldier's patience gives out the patience of everyone else has given out long before. It is time something was done.

Hundreds are deserting everyday rather than be kept here so some petty officer can show his authority. Perhaps you will think I am out of patience--well, I am and so is everyone in the company and regiment.

Some ten or twelve of Company C are under guard for refusing to work after the War Dept. had ordered all 1862 men home.

Shoulder straps, blue uniforms and brass buttons sometime cover a multitude of sins. To be sure there are exceptions.

I have known of some officers who have been highly complimented for their bravery on the field of battle. Their bravery had a whiskey bottle for support. But enough of this.

Don't think of looking for me before the eleventh of next September. If we do come before that time it won't be because our impudent Brevet Gen. Ex. Col. Hubbard had anything to do with it.

The last day of the month we are to be mustered for six months pay. When they get it some of the boys will leave discharge or no discharge.

Last night we received notice of the discharge of eleven men from the hospitals. Within the last two months over thirty have been discharged from our company.

Tom Beach was to leave for Conn. yesterday.

Give my love to all of the family and tell them to write and give me a description of the celebration.

When we passed through Washington the other day we met a Sunday School procession going up Pennsylvania Avenue flags and banners flying. They were led by a band of music.

Remember me to all of the neighbors. If you are a mind to you can send me a little more money.

Hoping to hear from you, I remain

Your affectionate son,
Lewis Bissell

Letter #189

Litchfield, Conn. Sunday Evening,
July 2nd, 1865

Dear Lewis:

We received your letter in answer to mother's and mine on Wednesday eve. It was dated at Fort Snyder.

It seemed to be a little rebellious in sentiment probably caused by your not being discharged and sent to Conn. as you fondly hoped.

I am sorry there should be any delay in the case of the 2nd Conn. for we all know how ardently you all desire to be home.

You write Col. James Hubbard has the "stars" on his shoulders. We here in Litchfield think that may be the reason why you are not sent home--have to wait in order to have Hubbard made a Brigadier.

These military men (officers) are the most selfish creatures in existence. Many times the more military is put on a man the meaner he becomes.

Many years since I heard the story of an Indian who on being chosen corporal stepped up to a man and knocked him down. On being asked why he did so replied, "It was to show my power." There may be for aught I know "A power behind the throne."

Monday Evening --

I left off writing to attend the prayer meeting at Dea. Dudleys. It was fully attended by all the neighbors. Bartholmew was down for Goshen. A Miss Cummings was there with him. She is a niece of Mr. and Mrs. Dudley.

The Rev. Mr. Harrison of Milton conducted the meeting. It being the first Sunday in the month we had a "Monthly Concert." Mr. H's remarks were very instructive.

The Rev. Frederick Buell of San Francisco (a native of this town) in the employ of the American Bible Society conducted a "Monthly Concert" in the lecture room.

Mr. Richards has gone to Boston so the Rev. Mr. Lyman (late of Washington) preached for him very much, I hope, to the acceptance of the congregation.

Tomorrow will be the Fourth when we will be called upon to celebrate in becoming style and dignity.

But Goodnight for the present.

Thursday Morning, July 6th.--

We all celebrated the Fourth in Litchfield but cannot now spend time to write about it.

We received yours dated June 29th last evening. I am very sorry such a state of feeling exists in the regiment. I know the boys ought not to be imposed upon and abused in this way.

I have read and carefully considered everything mentioned in your letter. I hardly know what advice to give you.

There had been ample preparation made to entertain "The Boys" on the Fourth but with sadness we learned they were not to be present.

One lady came from Kent with her little boys expecting to see the regiment and meet her husband but like the rest of us was disappointed.

Mrs. Bishop had a letter from John which mentioned the trouble in the regiment. Phil saw Chas. Merriman who had just come from Washington. He spoke of a "collision," between a Co. C man and the colonel. From what we have gathered here and there and from your letters we know there must be loud talking in camp.

I know that all of you feel aggrieved by not being "mustered out" in accordance with the order of the War Department and I do not wonder at it.

I hope the boys will not do anything unbecoming or out of character in this time of excitement. I think something will turn up in your favor soon. Perhaps when our good Gov. Buckingham is made acquainted with the facts of your case he may do something for your immediate relief. I think it is to the Gov. we are to look for help and sympathy at this time.

I think one of the best ways for the Old 19th to do is to have a committee appointed in each company and write immediately

to Gov. Buckingham giving him a fair and candid statement of the matter and asking him as Chief Magistrate of Conn. to see that you may be speedily and honorably discharged in accordance with the order of the War Department.

You write that you are to be mustered for six months' pay and many of the men if they get it will desert discharged or not.

I shall be very sorry to have any of the Old 19th leave the regiment in this way. The 11th of Sept. will come in nine weeks. That will be along soon. Better every man wait and have an honorable discharge and then all the Hubbards in creation cannot triumph over you.

If anything is to be done by you, you must all combine for your just rights.

You write that all of Co. A are feeling as though they were being trampled on by the officers, etc. I wish you had written more particulars. What officers? Give their names. How many and who in the regiment are with Hubbard? Where is Theodore? On which side is the chaplain? What are his feelings? Afraid to express their views I suppose as long as they can get good pay. Is Col. Hubbard a Mason? Do you know? We are beginning to get our eyes opened up here in L-d County on this subject.

If the colonel or any officer does wrong he will have to meet the consequences when he gets home. I feel as though their chance was no better than a private's.

The boys of the Old 19th are very dear to us and public opinion will go with them if they are wronged.

But I must close. Give my love to all the boys. Tell them to be of good courage and hope for the best.

How do Hinsdale and Dwight Stone feel in the matter?

Affectionately yours,

Henry B. Bissell

P.S. I am going into town this morning and will see Mr. McNeil. If he thinks best perhaps someone from here will also write the Gov. Write immediately.

Litchfield Village 11 A.M.--

In regard to the troubles in the regiment, I have spoken to Mr. McNeil. He has suggested that the best thing you can do is to remain quiet as you can--perhaps take no action whatever on what has passed.

Dea Chas. Adams is a personal friend of Gov. Buckingham and will consult with McNeil and if they think advisable the deacon will write the governor.

We are very much afraid that some of the boys may do something wrong under the excitement that now exists. Please use your influence to keep all as quiet as you can and remember that the darkest hour is just before daybreak.

In regard to deserting--we do sincerely hope that none will be found to bring disgrace on this old Litchfield County.

As I understand it deserters lose the bounties and all back pay, etc.

I can write no more at present.

Goodbye,

H.B. Bissell

Fort Ethan Allen, Va., July 8th, 1865

Dear Father,

I will write a few lines in answer to yours of the 6th, which reached me yesterday.

I am feeling well, so are all of the boys except Willard Watrous who is about sick.

Yesterday at ten o'clock we were mustered out of the U.S. service. We expect to leave tomorrow or Monday morning for Conn.

Perhaps we may have to remain in Hartford or New Haven a few days before our pay and discharge are forthcoming.

The boys are very quiet now they are mustered out. I guess none of them will desert now. A few may but none of the Old 19th. Some of the new men whose term of service does not expire soon may get out before the government sees fit to discharge them.

None of the officers is to be mustered out with us. A detail of officers is to be sent to accompany us home. Who they are to be I have not learned.

We expect to take our stand of colors and band so if you wish any blowing done we can accommodate you.

You will probably hear in Litchfield by telegram, of our arrival in New York.

There will be about two hundred and ninety of us--all that is left of the Old 19th here in the regiment.

With love for all, I remain

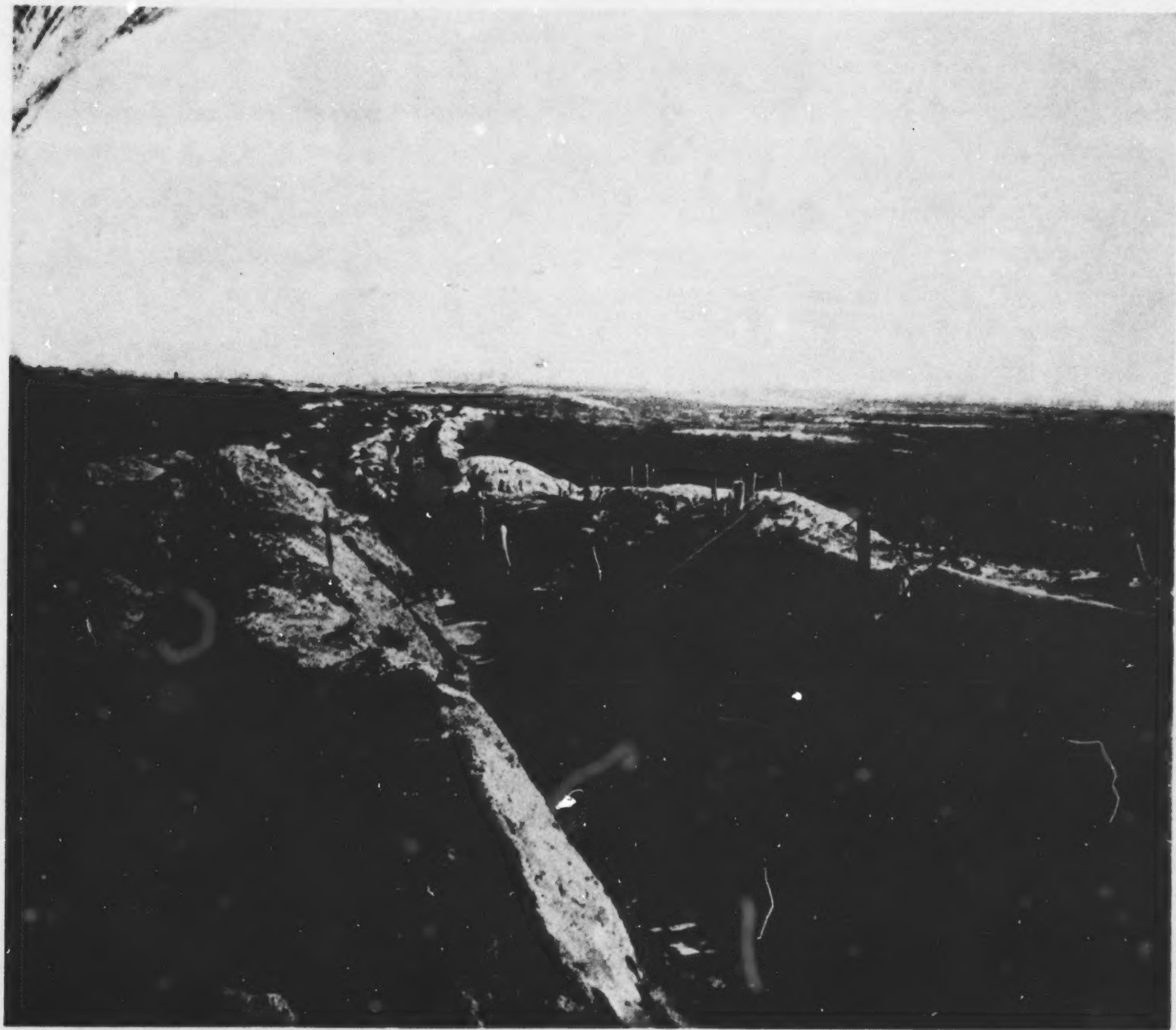
Everyour affectionate son,

Lewis

P.S. It is not necessary to trouble the governor about us now.

"Trenches at Petersburg"

401



423

424



LEWIS BISSELL circa 1920

EPILOGUE

Lewis returned to Bantam in time for the harvest. Though he had no trouble adjusting himself to the farm routine, he discovered he could not sleep in a bed, or a house, so he slept outside under the trees. In time, he determined that the life of a farmer was not for him so he traveled west to Iowa. While there, he decided he wanted to be a carpenter and he moved back to Connecticut and served an apprenticeship. He became a very skillful carpenter and, saving some money, bought a sawmill in Bantam and later included his brother, Samuel, in a partnership. At the same time he began a construction business.

In 1875, Lewis Bissell married Clara Jane Aldridge (born 1846). Their first child, Alice, died in 1882 at the age of 6. Carl Hillyer Bissell was born in 1881. Around 1885, the family moved into a house in Bantam built by Lewis Bissell.

By 1889, both the construction business and the sawmill were having financial difficulties. Samuel had died the previous year and Philip had succumbed to his hip injury. Lewis moved the next year to Syracuse, N.Y. In 1895, Lewis had established himself in the community and was prosperous enough to buy a small home. While living in Syracuse, Bissell learned of the death of his mother (1892) and father (1897).

Bissell lived the rest of his life in Syracuse, and with the passing of the years became involved with veteran organizations. He was the commander of his local G.A.R. post and served as chaplain also. He was a frequent and popular speaker at schools and civic functions. He was prominent in his attendance of Memorial Day ceremonies and attended funerals of Civil War veterans. His last tentmate, Dwight Stone, died in 1931.

On February 11, 1935, Lewis Bissell suffered a fall in his home and fractured his hip. He died February 28 having reached the age of 93. Five days later, his wife, grief stricken over the loss of her husband, died at the age of 89.



"Log Church at Petersburg"

404

651

427

APPENDIX I

"An Appeal to the Men of Connecticut"

We, the undersigned, members of the Nineteenth Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers, have been called from our homes to fight for the preservation of the liberties of our country, and are thus cut off from all participation in political affairs. Nevertheless, we have as deep an interest in the welfare of our State as any of you who have remained at home. We have taken up arms for your protection, and in your stead; and being deprived, by reason of absence, of the privilege of voting, we send you this appeal, as an expression of our sentiments in regard to the issues involved in the coming State election.

When the attack on Fort Sumter inaugurated the great rebellion, the traitors of the North hid themselves in alarm from before the resistless torrent of patriotic enthusiasm that threatened to overwhelm them; but they did not give over the hope of seeing the government destroyed, and of aiding in its overthrow. They knew that the flood-tide of patriotism would ebb--that taxation and distress and bereavement would cause many to care more for present than enduring peace--that the hardships of a soldier's life would cause discontent in the army; and they counted on these results, and on everything that is selfish and sordid in human nature, as helps to their infernal schemes. Whenever the cause of the country has seemed bright, these men have been silent, and have worked against us in secret; and when disaster has come upon our armies, they have crawled out of their holes, like snakes in sunshine, to bask their spotted skins, and exult over rebel successes! They have only been biding their time, and now they think their time has come. In Connecticut they have recently given expression to their purposes by the nomination of Thomas H. Seymour for Governor, and in resolutions adopted by their recent State Convention, which are nothing less than aid and comfort to the enemy in front of us.

In a letter published in the Hartford Times in July last, Thomas H. Seymour made us of the following language:

I follow in no crusade for the subjugation and consequent humiliation and overthrow of the South, neither will I contribute in any way to the accomplishment of such bloody purposes. The monstrous fallacy of the present day that the Union can be restored by destroying any part of the South, is one which will burst with the shells that are thrown into its defenceless cities.

Men of Connecticut! did you bid us go forth to face danger and death only that the State which we call our home might fall into the hands of such men as Thomas H. Seymour? Did you encourage us by your bounties, your banners, your words and deeds, to leave home, friends, everything, to fight Southern rebels, only that we might look back and see foes not less malignant, and not less dangerous, assailing us from behind? We pray you not to crush our resolution, and palsy our arms, by electing for your Governor, and ours, a man who hopes for our defeat and humiliation!

Fort Worth, Va., March 3, 1863

(Signed,)

B.D. Lee, Quartermaster. B.H. Camp, Sergeant Major.

Signed by 422 men of the 19th Connecticut, including Lewis Bissell and 43 others from Company A.

APPENDIX II

Command Structure

MILITARY DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON (designated Dept. of Washington, XXII Corps, on Feb. 2, 1863)

Maj. Gen. N. P. Banks (Sept. 1862-Oct. 27, 1862)

Maj. Gen. S. P. Heintzelman (Oct. 27, 1862-Feb. 2, 1863)

ARTILLERY DEFENSES OF ALEXANDRIA (designated 2nd Brigade, Defences South of the Potomac, XXII Corps, on Apr. 15, 1863)

Br. Gen. J. Slough (Sept., 1862-Jan. 12, 1862)

Br. Gen. R. O. Tyler (Jan. 12, 1863-Apr. 15, 1863)

DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON
XXII Corps

Maj. Gen. S. P. Heintzelman (Feb. 2, 1863-Oct. 13, 1863)

Maj. Gen. C. C. Augur (Oct. 13, 1863-June 7, 1865)

DEFENCES SOUTH OF THE POTOMAC

Br. Gen. R. O. Tyler (Apr. 15, 1863-Apr. 26, 1863)

Col. T. R. Tannatt, 1st Mass. Heavy Artillery (Apr. 26, 1863-May 25, 1863)

Br. Gen. G. A. DeRussy (May 25, 1863-Aug. 20, 1865)

2nd BRIGADE

Col. G. P. Wells, 34th Mass. (Apr. 15, 1863-May 3, 1863)

Col. L. W. Wessells, 19th Conn. (May 3, 1863-Sept. 20, 1863)

Col. L. Schirmer, 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery (Sept. 20, 1863-Oct. 1863)

Maj. L. Schamberger, 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery (Oct., 1863-Nov., 1863)

4th BRIGADE

Col. L. Schirmer, 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery (Nov. 5, 1863-Jan. 12, 1864)

Maj. L. Schamberger, 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery (Jan. 12, 1864-Feb. 12, 1864)

Col. L. Schirmer, 15th N.Y. Heavy Artillery (Feb. 12, 1864-Mar. 14, 1864)

Col. H. L. Abbot, 1st Conn. Heavy Artillery (Mar. 14, 1864-Apr. 25, 1864)

REGIMENT 2nd Conn. Heavy Artillery

Col. L. W. Wessells (July 28, 1862-Sept. 15, 1863)

Col. E. Kellogg (Oct. 23, 1863-June 1, 1863)

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC (May 20, 1864-July 8, 1864)
See chart of army structure at Cold Harbor in appendix

THE ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH (July 8, 1864-Dec. 6, 1864)
Commander, Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan)

Battle of Winchester, or Opequon (Sept. 19, 1864)

VI Corps	Maj. Gen. H. Wright
1st Division	Br. Gen. D. A. Russell (killed)
	Br. Gen. E. Upton (wounded)
2nd Brigade	Br. Gen. E. Upton
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. R. Mackenzie

Battle of Fisher's Hill (Sept. 22, 1864)

VI Corps	Maj. Gen. H. Wright
1st Division	Br. Gen. F. Wheaton
2nd Brigade	Col. J. Hamblin
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. R. Mackenzie

Battle of Cedar Creek (Oct. 19, 1864)

Army	Maj. Gen. Wright in command during Sheridan's absence.
VI Corps	Br. Gen. J. Ricketts (wounded)
	Br. Gen. G. Getty
1st Division	Br. Gen. F. Wheaton
2nd Brigade	Col. J. Hamblin (wounded)
	Col. R. Mackenzie (wounded)
	Col. E. Olcott, 121st N.Y.
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. R. Mackenzie
	Capt. E. Jones

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC (Dec. 6, 1864-June 16, 1865)
Commander, Maj. Gen. George Meade

Siege of Petersburg (Dec. 6-Apr. 2, 1865)*

VI Corps	Maj. Gen. H. Wright
1st Division	Br. Gen. F. Wheaton
2nd Brigade	Col. J. Hamblin
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. J. Hubbard

*This list represents the people who held the positions
longest over this period of time.

Battle of Hatcher's Run (Feb. 5-7, 1865)

VI Corps	Br. Gen. G. Getty (temporary command)
1st Division	Br. Gen. F. Wheaton
2nd Brigade	Br. Gen. R. Mackenzie
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. J. Hubbard

Battle at Sayler's Creek (Apr. 6, 1865)

VI Corps	Maj. Gen. H. Wright
1st Division	Br. Gen. F. Wheaton
2nd Brigade	Col. J. Hamblin
2nd Conn. H.A.	Col. J. Hubbard

APPENDIX III

Army Command at Cold Harbor, June 1, 1864

ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Grant

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

Meade

VI Corps
Maj. Gen.
H. Wright

IX Corps
Burnside

XVIII Corps
Smith

V Corps
Warren

II Corps
Hancock

1st Division
Br. Gen. D. Russell

2nd Division
Neill

3rd Division
Ricketts

2nd Brigade
Col. E. Upton

3rd Brigade
Eusti

4th Brigade
Cross

1st Brigade
Penrose

2nd Conn. H. A.
Col. E. Kellogg

121st N.Y.

65th N.Y.

95th Pa.

5th Maine

1st Battalion
Maj. Hubbard

2nd Battalion
Rice

3rd Battalion
Ells

Company A
Capt. L. Wadhams

Company B
Lewis

Company K
Spencer

Company E
Skinner

APPENDIX IV

The "Rebel Letter"--unedited transcript

Buckingham Va
April 4th 65

My Dear darling cousin

with a sad
heart I have seated my self to
answer you kind and welcome letter
baring date this 20 and it was peruse
with great pleasure. I was glad to
learn that you all were well this leaves
all well except sister Bettie she is
very poly oh cousin I am sorry to
tell you that my dear little Brother
Willie started to the army this
evening and one of my friends from
Nelson Joe Kobarts and him
started togeather oh Dear cousin
I cant tell you how trebole
I feel I wish you was here to shed

(page 2)

a sympathising tear Brother Willie
has been with us so long we will
miss him so much but I hope this
cruel war will soon end so then he
and all the rest of our dear friends
can return to there beloved old houses
in peace never again to leave there
beloved ones cousin I know I shall fail
to interest this evening cousin The
reason I dont write to you no oftener
The post offis is so fare off we cant
get our male regular

cousin did you
get Brother Willie letters he sent too of
off the same time I sent
mine he wondered whear I got your
letter wether you ever got his or not
cousin if you was here I could
talk but I cant half write that

(page 3)

know cousin I think it would suit
better to stay in you beloved old
state for the Virginia boys are
plenty good for me but I am
afraid we will have to marrie
yankeys before we die cousin you
must keep that pretty bean
until I come I will come if I ever

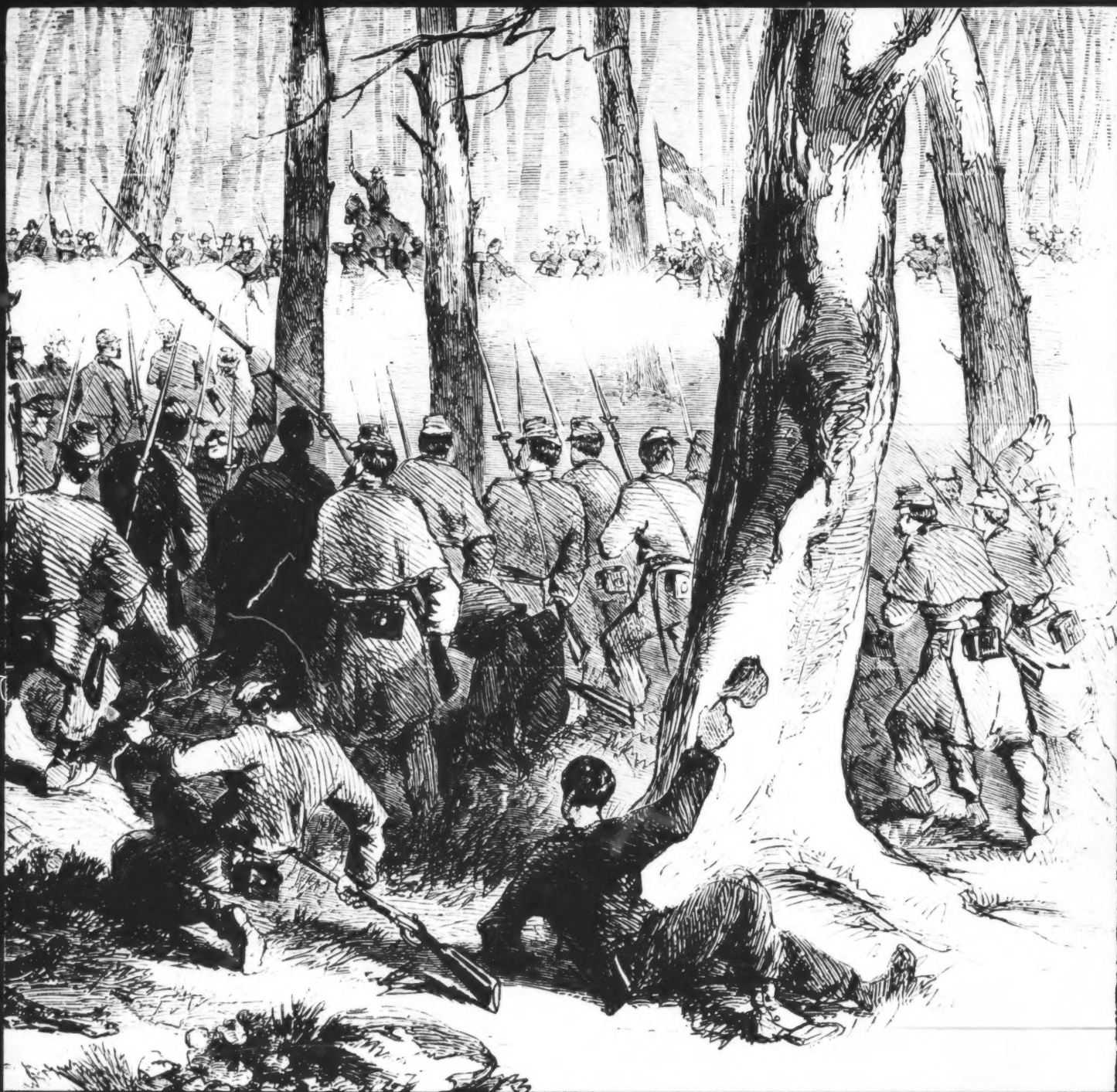
get of but you know it is very far
and we have no good way to come
but if you had been here to day
I would have given you a Pritty
(illegible) I tell you he is a nice little
fellow but alas he is to young to fight
the yankeys perhaps never to return
cousin I second you think I never
will send you a dress home but I cant
get any way to send it cousin
you said that I might have the dress

(page 4)

if I would accept of it would be
very acceptable but I did not expect
from you to give me the dress when
you left it down here I had sold
the other dress when you wrote for it.
cousin I wish you would come down
this summer and stay and then we
could settle do come if you pleas
for I want to see you very bad
sister Bettie send her love to you
and says she wants to see you very
bad give my best love to your
Pa and ma and kiss them for me
and receive (illegible) of my love as
wish give my love to your sister
and tell them to come down this
summer and stay well cousin I must
close by saying write soon
to your True cousin come soon

good by Sallie

Ella sends her love to you and all the
family sister Millie sends her love to you
Sallie



This book includes the letters of a Union soldier written during the Civil War and a curriculum guide which uses the letters as a focus for a unified history and literature curriculum. The result of incorporating an exciting and personal account of the war with a carefully constructed study guide is a curriculum that provides a dynamic learning experience for students.

"... a book which is a connection between disciplines, and guides the student to personally enter into human experience."

Elizabeth C. Ely
Director, The Field School

THE FIELD SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION PRESS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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